INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

HEAR JESUS’ CALL AND RESPOND

SEPTEMBER 2013

ST. DOMINIC’S CATHOLIC CHURCH
Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? (Yes, No, I Don’t Know)

Was this question easy or hard to answer?

Is this an important question?

What would you need to be able to answer this question?
Overview

What do you mean by Intentional Disciple?

Few Christians would argue the premise that we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. What “being a disciple” means and what that looks like is a great deal more confusing. At St. Dominic’s, we invite you to engage the concept of discipleship head-on. Maybe you’re already a disciple. If so, hopefully you will discover how to be more intentional about your discipleship. Maybe you’re not yet a disciple. If so, hopefully you will enter into a deeper understanding of what it means to be a disciple and become more hungry to respond to Jesus’ call.

Is there something wrong with me if I’m not a disciple or if I don’t know how to answer the question?

No, in fact, we assume that 90-95% of Catholics will answer “no,” “I don’t know,” or “huh.” Hopefully, we can agree that it is a question that is important enough to explore.

How can I participate?

We’re simply inviting you to explore the question on your own or gathering together with others.

What is asked of me?

First, pick up a booklet at St. Dominic’s each month and follow along. If you can, attend one of the Explore sessions offered each month. If you want to go deeper, sign up for a Small Christian Community. Small community will meet twice a month to discuss. We hope to be able to offer committed small communities and drop-in small communities as we get a better understanding of people’s interested.

What if I’m not sure how much of this I’m ready to do?

Pick up a booklet, and try it out. Pray about it.

I’m interested, but I just don’t have the time.

We understand that this will not fit everyone’s interest or schedule. We would like to ask you to pray for this initiative in the parish.

Jesus, let us hear your call anew.
Bless us with the courage to respond.
Clear away all barriers. Make us your disciples.
Format
Each month we’ll pick several scripture passages around an aspect or theme of discipleship. We’ll spend the month exploring that theme, going deeper and challenging ourselves. September and October will be months we’ll roll this out to the parish. We’ll be forming small communities as we go. We plan to make this a yearlong initiative. Here’s the planned format for each month:

**Week 1 – Explore**
Break open the scripture and explore discipleship. Our goal here is not just to understand how discipleship functioned when Jesus walked the Earth, we want to understand what discipleship means in our lives, today.

You can explore the scripture on your own through this book, or you can attend one of the presentations offered (see the upcoming schedule on the back cover).

**Week 2 – Share**
Consider joining a small community to discuss the meaning of discipleship to you. There is something powerful about gathering with others to explore our relationship with Jesus.

If you can’t join a small community, you can take time each day to pray the scripture and reflect on your own journey.

**Week 3 – Act**
This week we’ll challenged ourselves to take some practical step exploring discipleship in our daily lives. We’ll do this on our own, so if you’re part of a small community, there will not be a meeting this week.

**Week 4 – Share**
Gather again in your small community or reflect on your own.
The Annunciation

Luke 1:26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, 33 and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" 35 And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. 36 And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; 37 for nothing will be impossible for God." 38 Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Read prayerfully: What does it mean to be a disciple? What are qualities of discipleship? What are some misperceptions I have about discipleship?
While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Read prayerfully: What does it mean to be a disciple? What are qualities of discipleship? What are some misperceptions I have about discipleship?
The Call of Levi

Luke 5:27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." 28 And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him. 29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. 32 I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

Read prayerfully: What does it mean to be a disciple? What are qualities of discipleship? What are some misperceptions I have about discipleship?
The First Disciples

John 1:35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." 37 The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. 40 Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 42 Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas" (which is translated Peter).

43 The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." 46 But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." 51 And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Read prayerfully: What does it mean to be a disciple? What are qualities of discipleship? What are some misperceptions I have about discipleship?
Context and Insights

General

- These four stories all have something in common: they are call stories in which people encounter Jesus Christ and follow him.
- Three of the four stories relate to Jesus calling the Apostles, also called the Twelve or the Twelve Disciples.
- Rabbis in Jesus’ time did not go out collecting their own disciples, so Jesus’ act of calling disciples is rather unique.
- Jesus had many disciples, but the Gospels focus on the calling of the Twelve.
- Mary’s story is different, her “yes” opens the door to all other encounters with Jesus. The Church considers’ Mary to be the first disciple.
- Our own story may differ significantly, but these stories highlight aspects of discipleship that we can learn from. It is, in fact, a primary reason they were told and passed on.

Annunciation

- The appearance of the angel to Mary stands in contrast to the previous story of the angel appearing to Zechariah. Zechariah is an older man, from a priestly class, serving in the Temple. Mary was a young woman from a small town in the middle of nowhere. Yet, Zechariah responds with doubt (“How shall I know this?” - 1:18) while Mary responds with confusion (“How can this be?” - 1:34).
- Mary’s response to the invitation is perhaps the most profound response to a call ever: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (1:38).
- It’s easy to pass off Mary’s response as nothing special. She was, after all, Mary. It’s easy to miss the fact that this response opened her up to ridicule and potential stoning (Lev. 20:10)
- Mary’s “yes” comes after very little information. She does not know, for instance, that she will have to watch her son suffer and die.
- Mary’s relationship with Jesus is unique in human history. She is the Theotokos, the God-bearer. She is the instrument of the incarnation that brings Jesus (Fully God, Fully Human) into the world.
- It is fair to say that Mary’s “yes” to Jesus make all of our yeses possible.
The Call of Simon the Fisherman

- This story is not Simon Peter's first encounter with Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. Luke 4:38-39 tells the story of Jesus entering his home and healing his mother-in-law. This story gives us a context for Peter allowing Jesus into his boat, and later, following directions to “put out into deep water.”
- While this is a story about Jesus calling three disciples (four if you count Andrew, Peter's brother and fishing partner, mentioned in the parallel story in Matthew 5:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20), the narrative primarily focuses on Simon Peter.
- The great catch can be seen as both literal (Jesus allowing Peter to experience an event, opening him up through a familiar task) and emblematic of what Jesus had in store for Peters (you think you’re a good fisherman, wait until you see what you can do with me). Peter had already seen Jesus’ power to heal his mother-in-law, but this experiences speaks to Peter on a deeper level (try to avoid all mother-in-law jokes at this point :).
- Peter’s response shows some level of recognition of Jesus and of his own unworthiness of being called by Jesus (I’m not ready, not good enough, not the one you’re looking for).
- Jesus’ response, “do not be afraid.” He has larger plans for Peter.

The Call of Levi

- Levi is called Matthew in other Gospels.
- As a tax collector, he is hated by his fellow Jews because he collaborates with the Romans who occupy the region.
- Tax collectors were know for extorting more than was owed and keeping the excess.
- Levi doesn’t get a demonstration of Jesus’ power and authority. He simply gets an invitation.
- Levi’s response is immediate, and, like Simon Peter’s, involves abandoning his livelihood.
- Notice that Levi didn’t give up his life. The next scene has him back in his home throwing a party to introduce Jesus to his fellow tax collectors.
- By eating with tax collectors, Jesus is reconciling with them. This act gets the attention of those who believe that Jesus, if he is really a rabbi, should only eat with the righteous.
- Jesus responds by revealing something about his mission.
The First Disciples

- John’s Gospel gives a very different account of the calling of the Twelve.
- It starts with two disciples hanging out with John the Baptist.
- John points the disciples to Jesus and they follow. It almost seems by the story that they are not prepared for Jesus to stop and engage them.
- “What you looking for?” is a reasonable question. It’s one on which we could all do some reflecting.
- Jesus’ invitation is also fairly simple, “Come, and you will see?”
- Clearly, the disciples see something in Jesus because their first response is to share, to bring others into contact with Jesus.
- In John’s Gospel, it is Andrew who brings Simon Peter to meet Jesus.
- Phillip is able to overcome Nathanael’s bias (“Can anything good come from Nazareth?”) by extending Jesus’ simple invitation, “Come and see.”
- Jesus indicates that, if they stick with him, they see and experience wonders.

More General Comments

- It is worth noting that Mary and the disciples’ response to Jesus does not indicate a level of acceptance or even understanding of what it means to be disciples. The disciples will later debate about who is the most important, argue with Jesus about his plan to go to Jerusalem, attempt to protect Jesus from those seeking him, and even deny and betray him.
- Discipleship is about saying “yes” to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything else flows from this new relationship.
- Qualities include: openness, free will, trust, receptivity, humility, commitment, desire to share, adaptability.
Key Points

- Discipleship is about entering into a relationship with Jesus
  - Jesus calls you, the question is how you will respond
  - Following Jesus and learning from Jesus
  - Committed
  - Primary
  - Life changing
  - New reality, influencing decisions
  - A path or way of life

- Discipleship is not about:
  - Knowing everything about what is to come
  - Having all the answers
  - Agreeing with a list of principles
  - Being perfect

- There are many natural barriers
  - I’m not worthy
  - I’m not ready
  - I’m afraid of what Jesus might ask
  - I want to keep my options open
  - I’m a disciple of someone or something else
  - I don’t know how to respond
  - I’m too busy

- Ultimately
  - Jesus cannot show us what he wants us to see until we follow him
  - Discipleship involves some type of letting go (what we are doing, where we are doing it, how we see ourselves, our desire for total control, etc.)
  - Jesus does not call the ready; he readies the called
  - Jesus takes all that we have and gives it back to us in abundance

- Clues: Signs that might indicate that you’re a disciple:
  - Relationship with Jesus Christ
  - Making decisions based on that relationship
  - Letting-go (“dropping the net”) moment(s)

- Conclusion
  - Discipleship is not the same as, “Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior?”
  - Discipleship is the beginning of process.
  - Committing to Jesus Christ and letting Jesus teach us what it means to follow him.
Recap

*Definition of Discipleship:*

*Qualities of Disciples:*

*Misperception of Discipleship:*

*What might discipleship look like in your life today?*

*Note: While we want to track our initial answers above, these are questions that we will continue to develop answers to as the year unfolds.*
Week 2 - Share

Preparing

- Reread the scripture for this week.
  - Underline phrases that capture the essence of discipleship
  - Pick a phrase, one each morning
  - Write it on a slip of paper
  - Find seven times during the day to think about it and pray it

- Reflection questions:

  If you had to answer today, are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? Yes / No

  If yes, when did you become a disciple? What changed in your life when you became a disciple?

  If no, have you ever been asked this question before? What are your primary barriers to discipleship?

What is your definition of discipleship?

What might discipleship look like in your life today?
Individual Option

- Find 20-30 minutes where you won’t be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format listed in the Small Christian Community Process below.
- (10-20 minutes) Spend time reflecting on the questions outlined above.

Advice For Participating In Small Christian Communities

- The facilitator’s role is to guide the flow of the meeting. They are not in the group to be experts. Help the facilitators by following their lead.
- During the discussion period, there will be multiple questions or topic for conversation. It is best to take them one at a time (i.e., let everyone share about one before moving to the next).
- Don’t attempt to give the “right answer.” Just share your experience, insights, and perspective.
- Please stay on topic (the questions asked).
- Pay attention to time. Keep your answers on the shorter side. You can always add more later.
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak (i.e., give others a chance to speak before sharing a second time).
- It’s ok to not share if you don’t feel comfortable, but challenge yourself to share occasionally.
- Give your attention to the person speaking. Please don’t start side conversations.
- Avoid asking follow-up questions. Let people share what they want to share. It is always good to affirm others.
- Avoid answering other people’s questions (i.e., taking on the role of expert).
Small Christian Community Process - First Meeting
(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

● Introductions (10/15 minutes)
  ○ Each person should introduce themselves and answer the question, “What is one moment or event from the Gospel that you would like to have been present?”

● Explain Format (5/5 minutes)
  ○ Prayer:
    ■ Transition phrase spoken by a facilitator followed by 30-60 seconds of silence
    ■ A participant reads the day’s scripture passage
    ■ 1 minute of silence
    ■ A participant rereads the day’s scripture passage
    ■ For the remaining time, enter the scripture passage
      ● Become a person in the passage
      ● Walk through the scene using your imagination
      ● Utilize your sense (What do you see, hear, smell, taste, feel?)
      ● Fill in the gaps (What are you thinking, understanding, and worrying about?)
      ● Interact with Jesus (ask, respond, listen, etc.)
  ○ Discussion:
    ■ Have everyone read the participant’s advice (above)
    ■ Discussion will be a response to the prayer and reflection questions
  ○ Action/Request
    ■ Review plans for what to do between meetings
    ■ Participants can share thoughts, plans, and request prayers

● Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  ○ Transition Phrase: “Put out into deep water”
  ○ Reading: The Call of Simon the Fisherman (Luke 5:1-11)

● Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  ○ Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  ○ Continue discussing the reflection questions (previous page)

● Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  ○ The practical exercise is listed on the next page
  ○ Participants can share thoughts and plans
  ○ Participants can request prayers from the group
If you consider yourself a disciple, write down the story of how you became a disciple. Include people, places, and events that influenced you. How conscious was your decision? What stages did you go through? Find a friend or person (maybe in your group) and share a piece of your story.

If you do not consider yourself a disciple or if you are unsure, make a list of some people you know who may be disciples. Contact one person and ask them about their story of becoming a disciple.
Week 4 - SHARE

Preparing

- Continue to use the scripture phrases you highlighted when you prepared for Week 2:
  - Pick a phrase, one each morning
  - Write it on a slip of paper
  - Find seven times during the day to think about it and pray it

- Week 3 exercise:
  - Plan to share something about your Week 3 exercise
  - If you were not able to do it, plan to share your barriers.

Individual Option

- Find 20-30 minutes where you won't be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format listed in the Small Christian Community Process below.
- (10-20 minutes) Journal about the experience of the exercise from Week 3.

Small Christian Community Process - Second Meeting

(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

- Welcome and Check In (10/15 minutes)
  - Casual conversation: People can talk about what is happening in their lives.
- Explain Format (3/3 minutes)
  - Review format
  - Discussion will be based off to the questions from the practical exercise
- Prayer (12/17 minutes)
  - Transition Phrase: Jesus said, “Come and you will see.”
  - Reading: The First Disciples (John 1:35-51)
- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  - Continue discussing the questions (previous page)
- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  - Participants can share thoughts and plans
  - Participants can request prayers from the group
Extra: Write your own disciple's prayer (even if you're not yet ready to pray it).
Would You Like to Get More Involved with Intentional Disciples?

We are gradually rolling out the Intentional Disciple events and communities in September and October.

~~~

Upcoming “Explore” Sessions

Monday, September 16, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall
Thursday, September 19, 12:00-1:30 PM, Aquinas Room
Sunday, September 22, 10:30-11:30 AM, School Basement

~~~

To Connect With a Small Christian Community

http://www.stdominics.org/signup