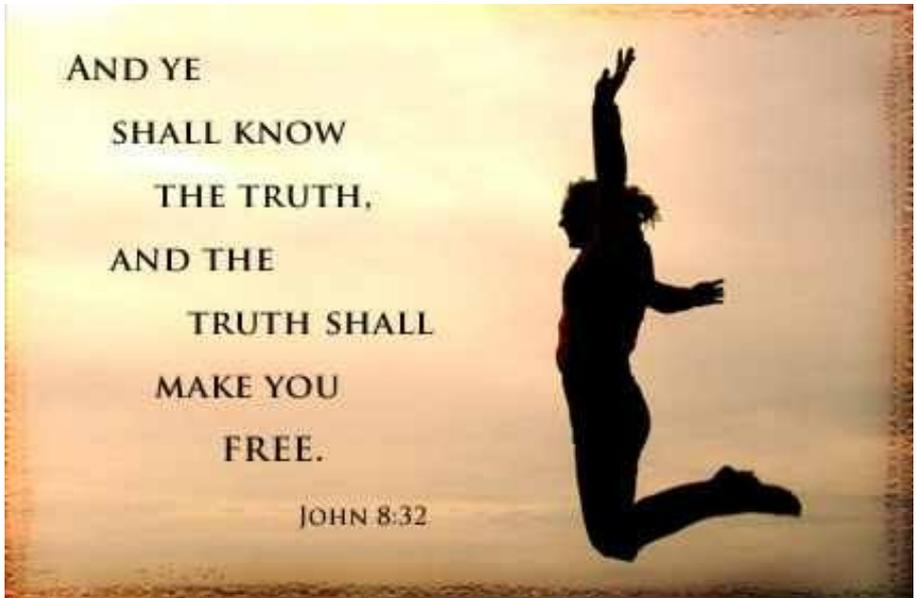


INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES ARE FREE



ST. DOMINIC'S JULY 2014

*"Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil,
but as slaves of God."*

1 Peter 2:16

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

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 in our lives, 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.

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* (everyone is welcome) 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 interests. Please see the back cover for specific dates.

When did the Intentional Disciples initiative start?

St. Dominic’s kicked off the Intentional Disciples initiative in September 2013. We are gradually rolling it out to the whole parish. We hope to be able to connect people whenever they learn about the initiative or are ready to get involved.

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. In September and October, we rolled this out to the parish. We have formed several small communities, but it is not too late to join one if you are interested (see the back cover). 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.

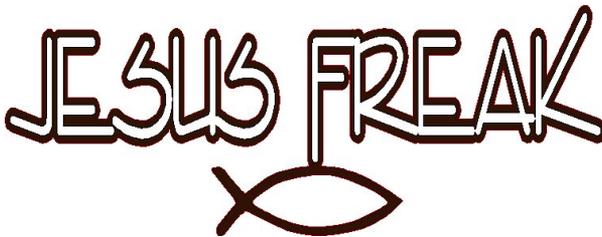
If you can't join a small community, you can take time each day to pray the scripture and reflect on your own journey.

WEEK 3 - ACT

This week we'll challenge 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.



INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES ARE FREE

To kick off this initiative, we asked:

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?

This month:

Starter

What is freedom?

How do you experience freedom as a disciple?

How do you share the gift of freedom in Jesus Christ?

How do you support the freedom of others?

WEEK 1 - EXPLORE

*He set me free in the open;
he rescued me because he loves me.*

Psalm 18:20

This month our country celebrates July 4th, Independence Day. The notions Americans have about freedom are often tied to the founding of our country. Today, in our civic discourse, freedom has become a battleground. We demand new freedoms. We rail against things we perceive as impinging on our freedom. We sometimes even focus on our own freedom at the expense of the freedom of others.

So what does freedom have to do with discipleship? To explore this, we have to go back to the journey of the Israelites with their God. The Israelites experienced God as a God of liberation:

[The LORD said to Moses], "I am the God of your father...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob...I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." -*Exodus 3:6-8*

But the journey of the Israelites continued to be difficult. After many centuries, some of the descendants of the Israelites met a man named Jesus and experienced a new kind of liberation. This freedom came about through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This freedom changed their lives, and even became something they were willing to die for.

As disciples, we need to explore the freedom we are offered in Jesus Christ. How does this freedom change our lives? How do we invite others to share in this freedom? Most of all, how do we do this in a way that honors each person's individual dignity and freedom?

*For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not
submit again to the yoke of slavery.*

Galatians 5:1

Main Texts

God's Love Endures Forever

Psalms 118:1 Give thanks to the LORD, who is good, whose love endures forever. ²Let the house of Israel say: God's love endures forever. ³Let the house of Aaron say, God's love endures forever. ⁴Let those who fear the LORD say, God's love endures forever. ⁵In danger I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. ⁶The LORD is with me; I am not afraid; what can mortals do against me? ⁷The LORD is with me as my helper; I shall look in triumph on my foes. ⁸Better to take refuge in the LORD than to put one's trust in mortals. ⁹Better to take refuge in the LORD than to put one's trust in princes. ¹⁰All the nations surrounded me; in the LORD'S name I crushed them... ²¹I thank you for you answered me; you have been my savior. ²²The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. ²³By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. ²⁴This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad. ²⁵LORD, grant salvation! LORD, grant good fortune! ²⁶Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the LORD'S house. ²⁷The LORD is God and has given us light. Join in procession with leafy branches up to the horns of the altar. ²⁸You are my God, I give you thanks; my God, I offer you praise. ²⁹Give thanks to the LORD, who is good, whose love endures forever.

Read prayerfully: Do you experience freedom in Jesus Christ? How do you respond to that freedom?

Jesus' Mission Statement

Luke 4:16 He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read ¹⁷and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."²⁰Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. ²¹He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Read prayerfully: Why is Jesus' mission so tied to liberation and freedom? How does he achieve this mission?

Freedom From Sin For Eternal Life

Romans 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Of course not! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, although you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 Freed from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your nature. For just as you presented the parts of your bodies as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for lawlessness, so now present them as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. 21 But what profit did you get then from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read prayerfully: How does Jesus free us from slavery to sin? What does Jesus free us for?

The Free Person (St. Thomas Aquinas)

The free man is he who belongs to himself; the slave is one who belongs to his master... Therefore, whoever avoids evil, not because it is wrong but as a result of a commandment of the Lord, is not free. On the other hand, he who avoids evil because it is wrong, is free. But this is due to the work of the Holy Spirit, who perfects our spirit from within by giving it a new dynamism [*power*], so that it refrains from evil because of love, as if divine law was commanding it; and so such a person is free, not that he is not subject to divine law, but because his interior dynamism moves him to do what divine law commands.

Read prayerfully: What is the difference between doing something because it is the law and doing something because it is right? How do we come to see and love what is right?

Conscience and Freedom (Vatican II)

Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World, 16: In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths.

Declaration On Religious Freedom, 3: On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious. The reason is that the exercise of religion, of its very nature, consists before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind.

Read prayerfully: What does it mean that God speaks to us, and to others, “in the depth of [our] conscience”? Why are our “internal, voluntary and free acts” so important?

Key Insights

General

- We often think of freedom as doing anything we want (and as teenagers we relish in testing that perceived freedom)
- Freedom is more about owning our actions (our choices and our response to relationship)

God's Love Endures Forever

- Freedom is experienced as a gift from a loving God
- We use terms like savior
- Think about how Christians apply many of these passages to Jesus
- Responding with thankfulness, praise, and worship

Jesus' Mission Statement

- It's always interesting to reflect on the core mission of Jesus
- We see words like liberation and freedom (go free)
- "A year acceptable to the Lord" is a Jubilee year that involves freeing those held in bondage

Freedom From Sin For Eternal Life

- A core experience of the early Church was freedom from sin
- We are set in a new relationship to sin and mortality
- We are freed from (sin) and freed for (eternal life with God)

The Free Person (St. Thomas Aquinas)

- Interesting how St. Thomas talks about following law as slavery
- The goal is to become free, a person of love

Conscience and Freedom (Vatican II)

- Conscience is the voice of God within us. This is the reason that we are bound by our conscience.
- We need to inform or conscience, so we can tell the difference between our voice and the voice of God.
- Obedience means "to listen to"
- We often perceive law as rules, but the language here of law is one of relationship
- Relationship and love should not be coerced, it must be freely offered and responded to.

Further Readings

Jesus Lectures Nicodemus On Freedom

John 3:¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him." ³Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can this happen?" ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? ¹¹Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Friendship With Christ

John 15:¹²This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. ¹⁷This I command you: love one another.

Our Freedom

John 8:31 Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Romans 6:6 We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:13 For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love.

Hebrews 2:14 Now since the children share in blood and flesh, [Jesus] likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life.

James 1:25 But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does.

James 2:12 So speak and so act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom.

1Peter 2:16 Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil, but as slaves of God.

Revelation 1:5b To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Recap & Prepare for Week 2

- Reread the scripture for this week (look through the extras).
 - Underline phrases that speak to your heart
 - 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, especially when you're facing temptation.
- Reflection questions:

What did you learn about your freedom?

What did you learn about the freedom of others?

How do we share and support freedom without diminishing the freedom of others?

WEEK 2 - SHARE

Individual Option

- Find 20-30 minutes where you won't be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format (*Lectio Divina*) in the group exercise 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).



How To Pray The Scripture Using *Lectio Divina*

- Goal:
 - Engage one of the scriptures at a deeper level
 - Allow the Spirit to teach our hearts
 - Provide fruit to lead into the discussion and sharing
- Steps (Should take 10-15 minutes):
 - *Lectio* (Reading, 2-5 minutes)
 - A participant reads the scripture passage
 - 30-60 seconds of silence
 - A participant reads the scripture passage
 - As the scripture is being read, the participants are invited to find a word, phrase, image, or idea that resonates with them. We'll call this the *focus*.
 - Example: Imagine reading the Our Father text from Matthew 6. People might focus on: "Thy Kingdom Come," "Lead Us," "Our," the idea of fatherhood, an image of God's Kingdom, Do I forgive others? Etc.
 - *Meditatio* (Meditate, 5-10 minutes)
 - Stay with the focus from above.
 - There are different ways to do this: Why does it resonate? What does it mean in my life today? Repeat it as a mantra. Imagine it. How is this connected to discipleship?
 - *Oratio* (Pray, 1-2 minutes)
 - Whatever comes up in meditation, form into a silent prayer offered to God.
 - *Contemplatio* (Contemplate, 1-2 minutes)
 - After speaking a prayer to God, sit and listen or rest in God's love.
 - This leads into discussion and sharing.
 - Start with insights from the prayer.
 - Transition to sharing about discipleship.
- Tips
 - There is no "right way," do what works for you
 - Embrace the silence
 - Let God find you

Small Christian Community Process - First Meeting

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

- Welcome & Check In *(5/10 minutes)*
- Review Format *(5/5 minutes)*
 - Review the participant's advice (page 15)
 - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
 - Review the prayer format : *Lectio Divina* (page 16)
 - Discussion will follow based on the prayer and the questions (page 14).
- Prayer *(10/15 minutes)*
 - Transition Passage: "The one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does." (James 1:25)
 - *Lectio Divina*: Psalm 118 (page 6)
- Discussion *(30/45 minutes)*
 - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
 - Discussing the reflection questions (page 14)
- Action/Request *(5/10 minutes)*
 - The practical exercise is listed on the next page
 - Participants can share thoughts and plans
 - Review date of the next group session
 - Participants can request prayers from the group

WEEK 3 - ACT

Make a list of the freedoms you experience:

Make a list of the influence you have over the freedoms of others:

Action: Make an act of thanksgiving for the freedoms you've received in Jesus Christ. Take a concrete step to support the freedoms of others.

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 ways to pray it throughout the day
- 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 (*Lectio Divina*) in the group exercise 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 & Check In (5/10 minutes)
- Review Format (5/5 minutes)
 - Review the participant's advice (page 15)
 - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
 - Review the prayer format : *Lectio Divina* (page 16)
 - Discussion will follow based on the prayer the Act exercise (page 18)
- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
 - Transition Passage: Jesus said, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)
 - *Lectio Divina*: Romans 6:15-23 (page 8)
- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
 - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
 - Discussing insights from the Act exercise
- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
 - Review date of the next Explore session
 - Participants can request prayers from the group

THREE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

1. Pick up a booklet, and explore on your own. -or-
2. Attend an “Explore” session to learn about this month’s scripture. Everyone is welcome. - or-
3. Check out a Small Christian Community to join with others to go deeper.



UPCOMING “EXPLORE” SESSIONS

Monday, July 7, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room

Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., July 9, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall

* The Young Adults group is a community of single and married Catholic adults in our 20s and 30s; to find out more, visit: <http://stdominics.org/youngadults>



CONNECT WITH A SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Contact Scott Moyer at scott@stdominics.org

Small Christian Community Meeting Dates

Sunday: On Break

Monday: July 14 & 28

YAG (Sunday): July 13 & 27

Thursday: TBA