“Probe me, God, know my heart; try me, know my concerns.”

Psalm 139:23
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 interested. 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 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.
Intentional Disciples
Have A Personal Relationship
With Jesus Christ

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 does it mean to have a personal relationship?

Do you think about your faith as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

What makes it difficult to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
Week 1 - Explore

Probe me, God, know my heart; try me, know my concerns.
Psalm 139:23

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? This question sounds like the kind of challenge we might get from our Evangelical brothers and sisters. Most Catholics don’t quite know how to answer the question, not because the answer is no, but because we’ve never thought in those terms.

Before we can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we have to explore the concept of a Person-God. The two greatest mysteries of the Christian faith speak to the heart of the notion of God as person: Trinity (three persons, one God) and Incarnation (one person, two natures).

One of the reasons we often find it difficult to image a personal relationship with Jesus is because it is easier to hold vague notions of God as some kind of energy (e.g., the Force in Star Wars). An energy field can be powerful and even a power for good, but an energy field cannot know your name, cannot know you. As Christians, we believe in a God who not only can know your name, but does know your name. We believe in a God who, as St. John put it, “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). We cannot have a relationship with an energy field, but we can have a relationship with a God who “made his dwelling among us.”

This moves us to the question of how we establish and develop this relationship. First, be warned, this not simply a me-and-Jesus relationship. As Pope Francis put it, “There are those who believe they can maintain a personal, direct and immediate relationship with Jesus Christ outside the communion and the mediation of the Church. These are dangerous and harmful temptations... It is in our brothers and in our sisters, with their gifts and limitations, that [Jesus] comes to meet us and make himself known. And this is what it means to belong to the Church” (General Audience, 6/25/14).

This month we’ll take up the challenge of developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and we will look at all of the ways that we do this in the flawed and messy and beautiful gift that we call Church.

We, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.
Romans 12:5
We Believe In A God With A Name

Exodus 3:4 When the LORD saw [Moses] coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." 5 God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 6 I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 7 But the LORD said, "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. 8 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... 9 So indeed the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have truly noted that the Egyptians are oppressing them... 12 ...I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain." 13 "But," said Moses to God, "when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" 14 God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you." 15 God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. "This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations."

Read prayerfully: Do you experience God as person (i.e., Person-God)? Do you believe that God knows you as a person? Knows us as a people?
The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. 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?" 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. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 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). The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. 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." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." 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." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 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."

Read prayerfully: How does Jesus change our experience and knowledge of God as person? How does Jesus call us individually and call us together as a people?
We Believe That Relationship With Jesus Is Relationship With The Father

John 14:1

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. 4 Where I am going you know the way." 5 Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works."

Read prayerfully: What does Jesus teach us about relationship with the Father? How does Jesus take us into relationship with the Father?
We Believe In A God Who Incorporates Us Into His Body, The Church

Acts 9:1

Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

Read prayerfully: What does the Church have to do with our relationship with Jesus? How did I come to know Jesus?
Key Insights

General

● The Incarnation facilitates relationship more than any other event in human history because we encounter God who “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14).

We Believe In A God With A Name

● God hears the cries of a people and responds
● The word “God” is a title, not a name
● In the ancient world to know a name was to know a things’ essence
● It makes sense that Moses should ask who he should say sent him
● God’s answer is, “I AM.” God’s essence is existence. God is not created; God is!
● God also defines himself in relationship, “the God of your fathers.”
● God saves his people through relationship

We Believe In A God Who Encounters And Calls

● What we have here are a series of relationships developing with Jesus
● Notice that they are not simply individual relationship. Jesus is forming a people.
● Also, the relationships facilitated other relationships (John points out Jesus to Andrew, Andrew introduces Peter to Jesus; Philip goes and finds Nathanael)

We Believe That Relationship With Jesus Is Relationship With The Father

● Our relationship with Jesus is central
● It brings us into relationship with the Father and eternal life
● Throughout John’s Gospel Jesus invokes the divine name “I AM”
● Here: “I am the way and the truth and the life.”

We Believe In A God Who Incorporates Us Into His Body, The Church

● Before St. Paul converted to Christianity he made it his goal to persecute Christians
● When he encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus (in pursuit of this mission), Jesus asks, “Why are you persecuting me?”
● Christian relationship with Jesus is relationship with his Body, the Church.
Further Readings

Friendship With Christ

John 15:12 This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I 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. 16 It 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. 17 This I command you: love one another.

The Man Born Blind

John 9:1 As he passed by he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. 4 We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, 7 and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed, and came back able to see. 8 His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some said, "It is," but others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am." 10 So they said to him, "(So) how were your eyes opened?" 11 He replied, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went there and washed and was able to see." 12 And they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know." 13 They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. 15 So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." 16 So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath." (But) others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." 18 Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. 19 They asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?" 20 His parents answered and said, "We know
that this is our son and that he was born blind. 21We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself." 22His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Messiah, he would be expelled from the synagogue. 23For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; question him." 24So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner." 25He replied, "If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." 26So they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" 28They ridiculed him and said, "You are that man's disciple; we are disciples of Moses! 29We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from." 30The man answered and said to them, "This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. 31We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. 32It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything." 34They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out. 35When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" 37Jesus said to him, "You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he." 38He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him. 39Then Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind." 40Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not also blind, are we?" 41Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains.
Developing a Relationship With Jesus Through His Church

Our parish becomes the fountain where we discover and deepen our relationship with Jesus. Here are some ways this happens (adapted from Forming Intentional Disciples by Sherry Weddell):

- relationships with other disciples
- Scripture (reading, study, lectio divina)
- teachings of the Church (formation, catechesis, religious education)
- evangelizing, preaching, and teaching
- well-done, prayerful liturgy and music
- the Sacraments
- true inquiry and evangelizing RCIA
- doing the works of Jesus (especially for the poor and suffering)
- encountering the Real Presence (Eucharistic Adoration)
- personal prayer
- experiencing healing in Jesus name
- evangelizing retreats and courses
- the discernment and exercise of the charisms
- hospitality (welcoming the stranger as Christ himself)
- the experience of discipleship-centered Christian community
- beauty (the arts, music, architecture, media)
- lives and prayers of the saints
- devotions
- Christian books

“If indeed, the parish is the Church placed in the neighborhoods of humanity, it lives and is at work through being deeply inserted in human society and intimately bound up with its aspirations and its dramatic events. Oftentimes the social context, especially in certain countries and environments, is violently shaken by elements of disintegration and de-humanization. The individual is lost and disoriented, but there always remains in the human heart the desire to experience and cultivate caring and personal relationships. The response to such a desire can come from the parish, when, with the lay faithful's participation, it adheres to its fundamental vocation and mission, that is, to be a "place" in the world for the community of believers to gather together as a "sign" and "instrument" of the vocation of all to communion, in a word, to be a house of welcome to all and a place of service to all, or, as Pope John XXIII was fond of saying, to be the ‘village fountain’ to which all would have recourse in their thirst.”

Christifideles Laici, Pope Saint John Paul II, 27
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:

  Am I able to view God as a God of relationship (i.e., a God who know my name)? Why or why not?

How have I developed my relationship with Jesus Christ?

How are others involved in helping me develop this relationship?
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*.
  - *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* (Conemplate, 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 LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” (Exodus 3:15)
  - *Lectio Divina*: John 1:35-49 (page 7)
- **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 ways you develop (or have developed in the past) your relationship with Jesus Christ:

Take a look at the list on page 13. What ways might you develop your relationship with Jesus Christ moving forward:

Action: Take one concrete step to deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ.
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, “I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.” (John 15:15b)
  - Lectio Divina: John 14:1-10 (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.

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UPCOMING “EXPLORE” SESSIONS

Monday, August 11, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room
Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., August 13, 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

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CONNECT WITH A SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Contact Scott Moyer at scott@stdominics.org

Small Christian Community Meeting Dates

Sunday: On Break  Monday: August 18 & 25(?)
YAG (Sunday): August 17 & 31  Thursday: On Break