

The Cost of Discipleship

Opening Prayer

Lord, you ask us to believe that in accepting the cross, we will come to fuller life.

Help us understand the mystery of the cross through the example of Jesus.

Speak your Word to our hearts as we reflect and pray together during this time. Amen.

Discussion:

What do you value most?

What do you spend most of your time, talents, and treasure on?

What is most important to you?

God is more important than anything else.

- Idolatry: then and now
“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
 - We desire good things, *but our desires can be twisted:* it depends on how we seek to achieve them.
- to sin is to freely and knowingly turn away from God
 - *Key Characteristic of Sins:* false sense of independence from God and others
- As Children of God, maturity is knowing our limits, not false self-confidence.

Idolatry of
Home/Place or
Group/Tribe/
Identity

Solemnity of Christ the King

- instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI (encyclical *Quas Primas*)
- God is our king, not our country, political party, ideology, or any other “idol”
- end of the liturgical year
- we await and look forward to the second coming of Jesus
- and the coming of the full and complete Kingdom of God on Earth

Disciples are not perfect

- Sometimes we turn away from God, but he always yearns for us to turn back towards Him.
- Our freedom and the tendency to turn away from God is – currently – part of human nature (“original sin”).
- If and when we let God in, we can become collaborators.

Just look at the behavior of the twelve disciples in the New Testament.

Discipleship and Suffering

- Being a member of the Kingdom will not necessarily bring peace and happiness, at least not all the time. There will be challenges in this life, including suffering and pain. (e.g., Jeremiah, Jonah)
- We are called to pick up our cross and follow Jesus.
- Suffering can be meaningful and ultimately lead to good
 - Sometimes one has to “learn things the hard way.”
 - God suffered like us – and used it to restore our connection to Him.
- Paradox of the Cross:
 - a sign of having lost (being a “loser”), humiliation in the time of historical Jesus.
 - Christians embraced the symbol of the cross, completely counter cultural originally.

We don't see how radical it is in our own time. It is a sign of how followers of Jesus are to seek to God's ways, not the ways of the world.

Discussion:

Describe a time when you felt compelled to speak the truth in spite of the consequences, and what happened to you. What moved you to speak nonetheless?

In your experience of taking up your cross, what feelings have emerged?

What new insights about the meaning of the cross did you discover in this reflection?

What crosses do you face at this time in your life?

Discipleship and Responsibilities

- Pagan sense of sacrifice: loss of something valuable (e.g., an animal)
- Christianity's emphasis is on our actions, how we live our life as the sacrifice.
 - Discipleship often calls us to see things and act in a way contrary to the “ways of the world” and mere self-interest.
 - Called to love all our fellow children of God, and look for ways to work for the good of all.
 - Baptism is to be lived – it is both a moment of grace and something we choose to embrace again and again (e.g., holy water and sign of the cross upon entering church).
 - Life is a journey, and the ending point itself is not the most important thing:
 - Eucharist: food for the journey

Grace: God is there to help us, is always calling us

*Our word “mass” derives from “missio” in Latin which means “sending forth.”
The Mass concludes with sending us out into the world
to fulfill God's will in our daily lives.*

- Part of being a disciple may be struggling with God (e.g., the name “Israel”)
- Everyone, every child of God, has gifts.
God expects us to do what we can with the gifts given to us.
We must endeavor to improve and bring about the “fullness” of the Kingdom of God.

Discussion:

We have a role to play.

What do you use your time, talents, and treasure for?

What can you use your time, talents, and treasure in the future?

Concluding Prayer

Loving God, give us the grace to trust in your love.

*Unite us ever more fully with Christ, who has walked the path of the cross,
and walks with us now. We pray in the name of Jesus, who died and is risen. Amen.*

“Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side;
my greatest concern is to be on God's side,
for God is always right.”

Abraham Lincoln