

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 21-22, 2022

*“For you bring certain ideas to our ears, and so we would
like to know what these things mean” (Acts 17:20)*

Let me begin by thanking everyone for your prayers. Last month, after a reaction to medicine, I was physically unable to present the second reflection in the series I started regarding my journey to True Discipleship. This reflection began a discussion on the five thresholds of conversion to discipleship. These were taken from a book entitled FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES, written by Sherry A. Weddell. The thresholds are: 1) Initial Trust (discussed last month); 2) Spiritual Curiosity; 3) Spiritual Openness; 4) Spiritual Seeking; and 5) Intentional Discipleship. Looking at the first threshold—Initial Trust—our reflection spoke to the difference between Trust and Faith—Faith being our belief system and Trust as our action based on our Faith. Recall the words of Jeremiah 17:7: *Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.*

Let us now turn to the second threshold—Spiritual Curiosity. Recall the story of Nicodemus (a pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin), told in the Gospel of John, chapter 3. Nicodemus had heard many stories regarding the things Jesus was teaching. Tales of the miracles He had performed were told far and wide. From all this talk, Nicodemus grew in his curiosity. This drew him to seek out Jesus, coming to Him “by night.” As their conversation began, Nicodemus said to Him: *“Rabbi, we know that you have arrived as a teacher from God. For no one would be able to accomplish these signs, which you accomplish, unless God were with him.”* Do we hear a hint of curiosity in these words? Jesus’ answer—*“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one has been reborn anew, his is not able to see the kingdom of God”*—only seemed to increase Nicodemus’ curiosity all the more. We see this taking shape in Nicodemus’ next question—*“How could a man be born when he is old? Surely, he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be reborn.”*

Nicodemus’ curiosity led him to seek Jesus, but Jesus’ answer to his questions only served to motivate him to continue to seek the answers to all his questions; until we see him again in the seventh chapter of John. Nicodemus stands to address the chief priests (who were discussing Jesus’ fate) declaring that their Law does not condemn without first giving the accused the chance to speak for himself. We see him one more time in chapter nineteen of John, accompanying Joseph of

Arimathea, bringing myrrh and aloe to anoint Jesus' body as it was laid in the tomb. Nicodemus first came to Jesus in the cover of darkness and his curiosity brought him into the light.

Just over a year ago, our son and daughter-in-law brought Margaret and I a beautiful baby granddaughter, Piper. She is learning to walk and as she does, there is a natural curiosity about everything around her. This curiosity is the means by which she learns about the world around herself. This same childlike curiosity is where we all need to be in our spiritual lives. Like Piper we need to yearn in our hearts for answers. Like Nicodemus we must continue our journey to discipleship, beginning in uncertainty and darkness, ever striving to know more. Like the fishermen in Sacred Scripture, we must cast our nets—our questions—into the water, waiting to see what we might reel in. This is the adventure of the journey we are on, lead by the Holy Spirit, taking us places we could never have imagined.

But one thing remains: Curiosity is a very powerful motivator. If not watched carefully, Piper's curiosity might cause her to stick a penny in an electric outlet or pull something heavy or hot onto herself. We have often heard of another powerful motivator called *Concupiscence*—that natural tendency toward sin. The curiosity that is also natural in each of us, can give in to Concupiscence—leading into the darkness of addiction and sin.

As I stated earlier, Piper's natural curiosity is essential to her understanding of the world around her. Just the same, Spiritual Curiosity is essential to spiritual growth. By study of Sacred Scripture and prayerful curiosity we, like Nicodemus, can find the answers that will lead us to True Discipleship.