

***Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time***  
***July 23-24, 2022***  
***Year of Saint Joseph***

*Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous  
things out of your law. (Psalm 119:18)*

As we look, today, at the last of our reflections on the meaning of discipleship, allow me to first refresh your thoughts on some key points of these past reflections.

Recall that the call to be a disciple of Christ has three distinct parts—a demand, grace, and a promise. The demand is a surrender of all the things of this world that stand in the way of total obedience to God. The grace—a gift from God—brings understanding and belief. The promise tells us that all we give—if we give our all—will multiply a hundredfold; it is the promise of eternal life.

Our reflections have looked at two of the five thresholds of our constant conversion to discipleship—Initial Trust and Spiritual Curiosity. Faith and trust, though different, go hand-in-hand. Faith is our belief and trust is action based on that faith.

Remember the curiosity of Nicodemus, the Pharisee, whose curiosity caused him to seek out Jesus, coming to Him by night. The answers he received from Jesus only served to fuel his curiosity all the more, eventually leading him to the openness we will be looking at soon. Yet, we must be aware and guard against our curiosity leading us down the path to concupiscence, the propensity toward sin passed down to us from Adam.

This brings us to the next threshold—Spiritual Openness. This is the scariest of all the thresholds, for it calls us to accept the possibility of personal and spiritual change. Pope Benedict XVI, in his inaugural homily, provided:

*“If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves to him, are we not afraid that he might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom?”*

As I stated, Spiritual Openness demands that we become open to the possibility of change. It is not a commitment to change. It is a call for us to let down our defenses. Is there something you think you have hidden from God? Is there something God may be calling you to do or say? Are you holding back some pleasure of this world in your life? Are the self-imposed burdens you carry weighing you down from “letting go—letting God.”

Matthew, chapter eleven, provides these words: *“Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.”* In this passage, the word “learn” (in Greek “Manthano”) comes from the same word root as “disciple” (“Mathetes”). It calls us to growth by inquiry, to “acquire a habit,” to “become accustomed to.”

In the verse at the top of this handout, God’s servant David is calling out, just as we should, for God to open our eyes, to remove the hardness of our hearts. God requires more than just a gathering of information. He desires a change in our life, a transformation. When we reach a point in our lives where we can be open to accepting this possibility of change, we are one step closer to our goal. This

“openness” will then drive our curiosity into “active seeking”, the last threshold before we can realize intentional discipleship.

In our last reflection, I promised to give you an update on my own journey. As I grew up in the Baptist Church, I had come to believe in Christ and had grown to trust in Him. Years later, when I married my lovely wife, Margaret, I told her not to expect me to darken the doors of the Catholic Church. The first step toward radical change in my life, came when a Catholic Priest, the Chaplain aboard the ship I was on, persuaded me to learn more about my wife’s religion and faith. My curiosity was peaked after the first RCIA class I attended. As I learned more, I wanted more. As my curiosity grew, I began to experience what I now understand to have been the call for a continued radical change in my life. Accepting that call, I felt a lifting of the heavy burden I was struggling under. My heart, that had become hardened by years of dwelling in the ways of this world, grew evermore open as I strove to learn more about this truth. My continuing journey to discipleship parallels my continuing formation as a deacon. The openness I have found has prompted me to actively seek more knowledge, more understanding, a different outlook. This journey has become a continuous conversion. In short, I’ve come a long way, but there is still so much more to be done. Please continue to pray for me, and I will pray for each of you, as we continue on this journey.