

Forming Intentional Disciples – Session 2

Fruits of Discipleship and Openness to Grace

When a community of believers begins to live as intentional disciples, parishes and communities will eventually experience growth, change, and a deeper spiritual life. A natural result of developing a friendship with Jesus is the desire to bring others into that friendship, which in turn strengthens communities. While visiting a parish that has specifically embraced a desire to encourage intentional discipleship, Sherry Weddell describes her experience at Mass:

It wasn't that the elements of Mass were different, although they were well and carefully celebrated. It was something else. I could *feel* a spiritual energy that I have hardly ever experienced before at Mass, as though the intensity of the prayer of those gathered lifted my own prayer to a new level.

In time, the parish community as a whole comes to live as Jesus lived, laboring to build up the Kingdom of God. A prayerful and supportive environment is formed, where parishioners are actively involved in a variety of ministries, Bible studies and catechesis is thriving, the youth are supported and encouraged, and financial support is abundant. Many vocations to the priesthood or religious life spring from such a prayerful environment as well. As an individual begins to grow as a disciple, they should begin discerning their own call, their own charisms, and their own gifts that God has given to them personally. It is through discernment and use of these gifts that God will use a disciple to evangelize and build up His Kingdom. Pope John Paul II said:

Indeed, God with His call reaches the call of each individual, and the Spirit, who abides deep within each disciple, gives Himself to each Christian with different charisms and special signs. Each one, therefore, must be helped to embrace the gift entrusted to him as a completely unique person, and to hear the words which the Spirit of God personally addresses to him.

Grace is vital to discerning a charism or call from God. Grace, essentially, is the love of God freely given and received. The clearest and most powerful route to Grace that God has given us is found in the Sacraments. As disciples, we must be properly disposed to reception of the sacraments in order for God's Grace to flow through us. Reception of the Sacraments should never be a passive event: the Grace we are able to receive from a Sacrament directly corresponds to how faithful and engaged our hearts are. Regular and faithful participation in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, with a heart open to God, will allow God's Grace to lead disciples into the life God has willed for them.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What charisms do you think God has equipped you with for building up the Kingdom? Consider visiting the following website to take a Spiritual Gifts Inventory: <http://www.staustin.org/index.cfm?load=page&page=278>
- 2) What is your own disposition when receiving the Sacraments? Is it routine for you, or is it a personal encounter with God?

Reading Assignments: Forming Intentional Disciples: Chapters 3 and 4

Scripture	Catechism
Acts 14:27	CCC 429
Matthew 28:19-20	CCC 1279
James 2:18	CCC 1072
1 John 3:24	CCC 1133-1134
1 Corinthians 2:12	CCC 1131
Hebrews 2:4	CCC 682
2 Corinthians 6:1	CCC 950-951
Ephesians 4:11-13	CCC 1324