

# Next STEPS

Week 1

September 16<sup>th</sup> 2018

Welcome to our new Homily series titled “Next Steps”

The yellow footprints you see on the screens are scattered all over the Marine Corps Recruit Depots in San Diego and in Parris Island.

I saw them myself when visiting their a few years ago with a friend.

In the early stages of a Marine recruit’s time at the training base, these footprints show the young Recruits where to go, where to stand,

and what to do.

And after following these steps during their training, these young men earn the title of United States Marine.

The Bible tells us in I Peter 2:21 that Jesus left us an example to “follow in His steps.”

Jesus did not leave us yellow footprints to follow on the ground like at those Marine bases, but He HAS left us His example in His word.

Jesus and his disciples in today’s Gospel set out for the villages of Caesarea in Philippi.

These journeys  
would not have been easy  
by our modern standards.

As Christians  
we are called to be followers  
or students of Jesus Christ.  
**Church people** call it Discipleship.

Discipleship is about following Jesus Christ.  
It is a journey.  
And every journey  
is made up of steps.  
And that's what this series is all about:

The simple steps of discipleship.

Because, as it turns out,  
in successful discipleship  
it all comes down to simple steps.

**They are not easy  
but they are entirely simple.**

Over the past few years

we have identified specific STEPS,  
each of which are,  
in fact, life style choices.

Choices that we think  
are essential to growing  
and strengthening our faith.

We think that in order to grow  
in faith in Jesus.

To grow in a relationship with him,  
a relationship in which he can change us  
and transform us,  
these STEPS are all important to take.

So over the next few weeks  
we are going to  
take a look at them.

Now before I lay them out to you,  
let me clarify  
that these are **NOT** obligations  
to check off, a check list.

Do you know

that the word *obligation*  
does **not appear even once**  
in the New Testament.

Jesus never talked about obligations.

***But*** he talked about steps  
all the time.

His favorite invitation  
to potential disciples was simply...

***Follow me.***

**Matthew**  
**4.19**

When it comes to faith  
there is a constant temptation  
to look at spiritual practices  
as obligations to be fulfilled  
or hoops  
we have to jump through.

The steps we are talking about  
are **not obligations.**

As soon as you look

at these steps as obligations  
that you have to do,  
to be a good Christian  
or a “practicing Catholic”  
you weaken their potential effectiveness’  
the steps lose their ability  
to change and transform us.

The point is not to get you  
to do more stuff,  
None of you need more stuff to do.

The steps we’re talking about  
are aimed toward simplifying  
not complicating your life.

Neither is the point  
of this series to take every single step  
all at once.

They are called STEPS  
because they are meant  
to be taken  
**one at a time**  
as God calls you to take them.

We just want to make you aware of these steps.

And we encourage you to take the next step that is the **right next Step for you.**

***STEPS is an acronym...***  
*You knew that was coming.*

**“S”** - stands for serve  
Serving in a ministry and or missions.  
One of the descriptions used most often in the Scriptures for the men and woman who were closest to God is... ***my servant***  
**Genesis 26.24**

Jesus himself said,

***<sup>45</sup> For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,***

**Mark 10.45**

To grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ it is vitally important

that you learn to serve,  
generously and freely.

Christ-like servants serve  
for the benefit of others.  
In your heart that is the kind of person  
you really want to be,  
you want to be someone  
who makes a difference  
in the lives of others.

**“T”** - is about tithing and giving.

Perhaps nothing grows your faith  
and trust in God  
as much as giving.

Money brings security and freedom.  
And giving it away is always a risk.  
Jesus said that our money and possessions  
represent the greatest competitor  
**God has for our hearts.**

It is the greatest obstacle  
to putting our faith and trust in God.  
That's why Jesus talked about it

all the time.

Our money and possessions also give us a huge opportunity to put our faith into action, to accomplish great good.

God is generous.  
God is a giver  
and we can use our money to become more like him.

**“E”** - is engage which is about small groups.

Faith is personal, not private.  
It needs to be lived out in a community of people.  
We all need friends in faith who strengthen and support us in our relationship with Christ.

We need people around us who can encourage us

**Aside:**

**We are offering a number of ways**

that you can engage in small groups.  
On the last Tuesday Morning of each month  
is Fr. Al men's sharing group.

We are starting Alpha  
a series of interactive sessions  
exploring the basics of the Christian faith.

Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> 6:30pm

Starting Tuesday Sept 25<sup>th</sup> at 7pm

or Wed. Sept 26<sup>th</sup> at 1pm

we begin Mary: A Biblical Walk  
with the Blessed Mother .

For more info go to our web-site

[GSLAKESHORE.COM](http://GSLAKESHORE.COM) or our Parish Bulletin

**“P”** - Is the practice of prayer  
and the sacraments.

To grow as a follower of Christ  
you need to talk to him.

We need to learn  
to hear his voice,  
to recognize it,

That happens  
in a daily quiet time  
in which we're talking to him  
and allowing him to talk to us.

To that daily quiet time  
we add our weekly worship at Church  
in which we celebrate the Eucharist.

This time is going  
to be far richer and rewarding,  
it is going to be  
the nourishment and encouragement  
its meant to be  
**if its matched with daily quiet time.**

In turn, the Eucharist  
can be the source and summit  
of a life of prayer.

**"S"** - Lastly we talk about sharing our faith.

As a Church we steward  
the most incredible and important

message there is.

God so loved the world  
that he gave us his only Son.  
God wants to include us  
in the life of his kingdom.  
And we don't buy it  
and we can't earn it,  
we can't work our way to it,  
we'll never deserve it.

There is only one thing  
we can do with it  
...share it.

Like in our Gospel today  
...Jesus asks his disciples  
“Who do people say that I am?”

Then he asked  
“Who do you say that I am”.

Sharing who Jesus is  
Is an important step in Discipleship.

In fact, our faith actually grows

as we share this message with others.

In today's gospel reading  
Jesus makes a remarkable challenge  
that is also an amazing promise He says:

*<sup>34</sup> "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. Mark 8:34, 35*

Discipleship is simply following the Lord,  
step by step.

It is not perfection,  
It is not sainthood or sanctity,

It is following the Lord step by step...

A little bit more today  
than yesterday

A little bit more tomorrow  
than today

And in the process  
our life is simply more successful.

These steps are steps to a life in Christ.