

In the last couple of weeks I have written about our parish vision, which gives our parish as a whole a common direction, to guide our decision-making, and to help focus our priorities so we can use our resources well. Our vision has one key word, and four bullet points. Last week I introduced the first bullet point, Love God.

Our second bullet point is: **Grow Disciples**. We disciples are the people who have made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. That's not something we do one time; discipleship is a way of life.

Discipleship is the process of conversion from a life centered on myself, to a life whose daily focus is *following the desires of God, living out the teaching of Jesus, guided each day by the power, wisdom, and strength of the Holy Spirit*.

Discipleship is ongoing and is not completed when we are confirmed, or are ordained. Discipleship is much more like marriage, which begins with courtship, engagement, and then the vows that are exchanged at a wedding ceremony. The wedding day is the beginning and not the end of marriage, which must deepen and grow so it does not stagnate and die.

So it is also for disciples of Jesus Christ. We must continue to learn and put into practice on a daily basis – how do we strengthen our family life? How can we pray better? How can we understand the deep riches of the Bible? How can we practice the virtues better and avoid the temptations and snares of evil?

Discipleship is not merely education and attending classes; it is the practical formation of *doing* what disciples do. How do we help our children and young people not simply learn things *about* God and the Church, but come to know God in a personal way, and then *be* the Church that Christ has called us to be?

Most of the time that's done better when we do it with others and not by ourselves – Bible studies, small Christian communities, prayer groups, classes, spiritual book clubs, support groups for those who are grieving and those who are divorced and those who have been suffered trauma; 12-step programs, retreats, faith formation, group spiritual direction.

We engage in all these activities as means to help us **grow to be better disciples** of our Lord. As we do so, we become a better enfleshment of the living Christ in the world, so that others can see him and know him.

"Living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)