

What it means to be 'A Disciple of Christ'

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After receiving the blessings of the Christmas Season, celebrating the birth of Christ Our Lord, many return to their ordinary schedules of prayer, work or family obligations. So too, the Church enters a portion of Ordinary Time. Throughout Advent and Christmas, we placed the emphasis of our prayers and attention on welcoming Christ into our hearts and homes while ever awaiting His triumphant return with the Second Coming. Now in this Ordinary Time, we take Christ with us and go forth living what it means to be *A Disciple of Christ*. Call to mind the lives of Christ's early Disciples, of the Saints who lived heroically, and even of those great examples of holiness in our own lives. How might we follow these examples in everyday life in order to be *A Disciple of Christ*?

First let us recall Christ's words to His Disciples, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Mt. 28:19-20). Jesus gives them a mission! What mission has the Lord called you to do with your life? Do you help at a food pantry, volunteer at your Parish, work to counter Human Trafficking or the pornography industry that thrives in our society? Yes, it can get messy. How are you deepening your journey in becoming *A Disciple of Christ*? These are all great ways to take what you have received and to give back in some way in the name of Christ.

To each one of us Christ says, "Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give." (Matthew 10:8). In order to live as *A Disciple of Christ*, this mission must be embraced like the Cross itself. Of course, this may be difficult at times, there may be the temptation to think, "What am I able to give?" along with thoughts of inadequacy or tepidness. It is important to know that it is not always big things that the Lord asks of us. St. Mother Teresa, whom I had the pleasure of speaking with on several occasions, taught that, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." These words of hers are an encouragement to me as they may be for you as well.

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus tells the parable of the sower. If we focus on the sower he seems absolutely mad. Why? Throwing seed just everywhere with no regard for the soil where the seeds land. The farmer could be thought to be crazy for not targeting the placement of the seed, seeding only the good soil. However, God asks you and I to go out and sow His Word and His love – not only on receptive soil, not only to those who will respond but also on the path, on the rocks and into the thorn bushes. God's love is irrational, extravagant, embarrassing, even unreasonable and over the top.

So, do not be afraid to do even the big things at the prompting of God on the journey of becoming *A Disciple of Christ*; the extravagant action that some see as over the top may be what Christ calls you to do as a Disciple. Take the risk, make the move,

take even the smallest step and do not worry about who notices. Sow His Word as A Disciple of Christ and leave the rest to the providence of God. Do not be afraid!

In times where the Lord may be asking more of us, the words spoken to St. Paul offer consolation wherein Christ says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9). Whether something small is being asked of you or something great, there are always more opportunities to respond to this mission; to go forth in the Name of the Lord as *A Disciple of Christ*. Pope Francis has taught us that "In virtue of [...] baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples" and continues by saying all the faithful are called to a personal involvement in the work of evangelization.

Have courage in knowing the Lord desires to use you, your particular skills and abilities, your gifts and talents. Continue to invite Christ into your home and your heart, then take Him out into the streets, into your communities. They may not be pretty but as St. Mother Teresa told us, "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin." Be encouraged to continue the ways you are already living as *A Disciple of Christ* in your life and to begin new ways, new actions today.

As we continue this portion of Ordinary Time, let us work together in this mission that Christ has given us to go forth and to spread the Gospel and be *A Disciple of Christ*. To be people of action!!

Thank you for responding to His call in your life. Rest assured of my prayers that you would continue to allow Christ into your life in new ways, big or small each day and go forth in action. Please keep me in your prayers as well.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Frank J. Dewane