

THE COMMUNITY OF THE LORD'S DISCIPLES



UNPACKING THE EMMAUS SERIES

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Designed and produced by Patrick Lim*

THE EMMAUS SERIES



Questions Catholics ask on their journey of Faith

THE COMMUNITY OF THE LORD'S DISCIPLES

SESSION 1

Note: In order to present the material of this DVD in two parts, Chapter 2, 'Recovering the Meaning of our Discipleship' is divided between the two sessions. Viewing of Session 1 ends 16 minutes and 43 seconds from the beginning of the presentation, at the graphic of the two fishermen in the boat by the shore of Galilee. Sessions 2 starts from that point and continues to the end of the presentation.

Introductory reading

Gospel of Matthew (5:13-16)

In this passage Jesus tells his disciples of the great responsibility to which they are called.

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under foot ... You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of all, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven. ◇

Question opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp.14-15 – sharing reactions to the following question:

Question

- ◆ John Paul II saw 'discipleship' as basic to a renewed faith. Though it was not much discussed in our Catholic formation in recent times, references to the Lord's 'disciples' are very frequent in the New Testament. What does being a disciple suggest to you? Are we all disciples?

Viewing of DVD

NOTE: *Viewing of Session 1 starts from beginning of the presentation and ends 16 minutes 43 seconds into the DVD from the beginning of the presentation, at the graphic of two fishermen near the shore of lake Galilee .*

- ◆ Chapter 1:
Our Basic Christian Calling
- ◆ Chapter 2:
Recovering the Meaning of our Discipleship
(ends 16 minutes 43 seconds into the DVD)

Sharing reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp.14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

Prayer of St Francis of Assisi

St Francis expresses his spirit of discipleship.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is despair in life, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Oh, Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving of ourselves that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life. ◇

Final reflective sharing

This final sharing of personal responses to the questions given below is the most important phase of the session, and should be entered into generously, in the spirit of the Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15.

It may begin with a brief period of silent reflection, which is followed by two stages:

- 1. An informal Buzz Session in which each participant is able to express their response to each question – questions should be discussed separately.*
- 2. The sharing is brought to a conclusion, with each participant expressing, in a few words, what is their personal response to each question – in view of all that has been discussed in the session.*

Questions

- ◆ Recalling the question we raised at the beginning of the session, how has what we have seen led you to reconsider your understanding of discipleship?
- ◆ Were there things that moved you in this session, things that can help you in your journey of faith?

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SESSION 2

Introductory reading

The Way of the Disciple (2003 pp. 15-18)
by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis,
an author formed in the tradition of Eastern Christianity

When Jesus one day showed his apostles how to bring in an overwhelming catch of fish, Peter's reaction was to fall down at Jesus' knees and exclaim: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'. But Peter's reaction was very different on the occasion when Jesus presents himself to the world as the Bread of Life and many found the teaching difficult and began to turn their backs on him. As the Lord pointedly asked the Twelve, 'Will you also go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'. These are indeed the two apparently opposite impulses that define the essence of discipleship: on the one hand, the consciousness of one's utter unworthiness to abide in the presence of the holy God and, simultaneously, one's desperate need precisely to abide in that presence, the only source of lasting life and joy ...

... the passion for simply abiding in the company of Jesus, the need continually *to be with him* in every sense of that verb, is the very heart of discipleship ... But we must first address the prerequisite attitude for becoming in earnest a disciple of Christ, namely, the willingness to abandon the old, what is behind us, and begin to desire to be created again by the power of God's Holy Spirit ...

Note ... how faith is the beginning of a work of transformation and enlightenment, the work of God's Spirit in us, accomplishing in us what has already been accomplished in Christ. In other words, his own glorious destiny is ours, too, a truth that climaxes liturgically in the feast of our Lady's Assumption and glorification: the Resurrection of the Son has already worked its full effect in the Mother who bore him in faith and love, and this, too, is our own path and destiny if we want it to be and if we are willing to live accordingly. ◇

Questions opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing reactions to the following questions:

Questions

- ◆ John Paul II called the Church to find renewal by understanding itself as 'the community of the Lord's disciples'. What benefits do you think would come to our Church communities if they followed his advice?

- ◆ When all is said and done, do you think the discipleship we are considering is an impossible ideal for many people?

Viewing of DVD

NOTE: *Viewing of Session 2 starts 16 minutes 43 seconds into the DVD from the beginning of the presentation, at the graphic of two fishermen near the shore of lake Galilee, and continues to the end of the presentation.*

- ◆ Chapter 2:
Recovering the Meaning of Our Discipleship
(starts 16 minutes and 43 seconds into the DVD)
- ◆ Chapter 3:
What does it mean in practice?
- ◆ Chapter 4:
A Pathway to Renewal

Sharing of reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet ‘Getting Started’ pp. 14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

The Way of the Disciple (2003 pp27-28)

by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis

About the blessings of discipleship.

The Glory of God is always found in movements of love, in communication of life, never in static routine, cramped piety, thoughtless repetition of official acts, conventional observance, external religious acts that could easily become the letter that kills ... The Spirit by contrast, is wind, fire, light, water, Glory; the unexpected, the transforming, the self-communicating, the self-outpouring Power that shapes by embracing and not letting go.

The way of the disciple is necessarily a way of discipline, because discipleship is the living school in which we *learn* how to be like Christ by intimate association with him. The discipline of Christian life, whether in its secular or its monastic form, is supposed to provide a structure that systematically excludes all the pseudo-adventures and pseudo-fulfillments offered by a frivolous world. Christian discipline is there to open the way for the real adventure of the soul's quest for God and God's quest for the soul, and it would be tragic if, instead this, discipline became its own end.

Can we, like our Lady, become a 'temple of the Spirit's glory' and a 'house of divinity'? Can Jesus be 'glorified in us' without our beginning to show qualities such as his own joyful freedom in service of the Father? How can I tell when the fire of the Holy Spirit continues to burn within me or when I have managed to half-extinguish it, perhaps, ironically, by a certain kind of religious routine? How can I expect to be embraced by God *as I am*, if I will not embrace my sister and brother

until they conform to the image of them I have myself created? Christian discipline should create a *space of freedom*, within me, within the community. Does it instead at times result in a clutter of observances piled up on one another, or the frozenness of a self-satisfied soul? ... ◇

Final reflective sharing

This final sharing of personal responses to the questions given below is the most important phase of the session, and should be entered into generously, in the spirit of the Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15.

It may begin with a brief period of silent reflection, which is followed by two stages:

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Questions

- ◆ Developing a personal relationship with Christ has always been high on the agenda of Catholicism. Does what we have seen in our two sessions on discipleship point to a practical way of fostering this relationship?
- ◆ Has what we have discussed in our two sessions given you hope and a sense of possibilities for the renewal of Church life?

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

In his first Encyclical, John Paul II suggested that the Church's life will be renewed if it sees itself as "the community of the Lord's disciples".

Because "disciple" is a familiar word, constantly used in the New Testament, it may seem stale and "churchy". It means "learner" – one seeking to learn from a great leader. When we appreciate how important it was for the first Christians, it becomes clear that it should not be abandoned. If it has become stale it must be given new clarity and new vitality.

Christian discipleship depends upon the choice and call of Jesus, not upon our decision or personal qualities.

Those called form a sign community – though differing in age, maturity, background etc they show the world that "in Jesus Christ" the differences that divide humanity can be overcome.

Christian discipleship is radically different from the following of the Jewish rabbis. The call of Jesus unites his disciples to him forever. The truth found by the disciples of Jesus is not a truth about God, but the divine truth itself that Jesus is.

His disciples, Jesus tells us, form his new family, sharing his mission, his cross and his final glory.

The New Testament shows that Christian discipleship has many forms. All believers, men and women, were called "disciples", even those who had not known Jesus during his earthly life. Some left all things to follow him. Some returned to their usual occupations. Some hesitated, becoming learners at the edge of the crowd around Jesus.

As John Paul II has reminded us, the spirit of discipleship can help the Church to find the renewal to which it is called. It provides a straightforward answer to the Church's main problems. If the Church of recent centuries has tended to live in a world apart, those who are gathered around Jesus will never turn their backs on struggling humanity. If, like all big institutions, the Church has depersonalising tendencies, discipleship puts the personal relationship of each believer with the Saviour at the centre of Christian life. If the Church needs a new style of pastoral leadership, the trust engendered in a community of common discipleship will help develop the collaborative leadership we need.

Discipleship provides an accessible program of personal spirituality and prayer.

The prophetic blessings given to the Church can enrich us all, if disciples share what – through the Spirit – they have learned from the Lord. □

Published by
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