

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
~John 1:1

The Lord's Flock
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"Signs of Discipleship"

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What is discipleship? Discipleship is the way of following the Lord Jesus.

How can we know whether or not the Gospel message has really taken root in us? How do we know that we are really growing in intimacy with Jesus – moving from "image" to "likeness" of Jesus? Is Christ's grace operative in us?

What are some of the signs or indicators of discipleship?

1) When we are convinced that God loves us unconditionally the way we are now. We live out this conviction.

Our own existence is the absolute proof that God loves us. God knew before He created us that we were going to commit sins and yet He brought us into this world. This is clear evidence that God loves us unconditionally.

Because God loves us unconditionally, we ourselves should have compassionate love as much as Christ loves us.

2) When we discover behind the problems and incidents of our life God's love and providence – no matter how serious and painful they may be.

Let us recognize that the main problem in our life often comes from within ourselves. The main problem is ourselves – not our genes, not our parents, not other people, not circumstances around us.

3) When we have to "paschalize" negative events by making out of stumbling blocks stepping stones for our better future. God's plans for us are always good.

"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for your foe! plans to give you a future full of hope." (Jeremiah 29:11).

"But what comes out of a person, that is what defiles. From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly." (Mark 7:20-22).

We must turn to Jesus for the solution – for our own healing.

We can be healed by the Lord only if we accept that we have sinned. We can avail of the sacraments of reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. Complete healing is ultimately achieved through deep spiritual life of prayer and discernment in the exercise of our freedom of choice.

4) When we love with Christ-like love. We grow in understanding, compassion, and tolerance towards people with live with and work with.

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that

you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35).

A Christ-like love is a universal love for all – including the poor, the marginalized, and the outcast. It is also a *compassionate love* – a love whose giver is willing to suffer.

- 5) **When we follow the Lord by *doing*.** We have to contemplate Christ as the Gospel portrays Him: what He said and what He did. We have to study lovingly His mind, His heart, His way of thinking, His way of seeing things, His relation to the Father, and His relation to human beings.

To be a Christian is to have Christ at the very center of our life and to become more like Him.

Let us ask ourselves whether we love as much as Jesus loves us. Do we love even those from whom we can expect nothing in return? Do we also love those who are less lovable, those who contradict us, and those who frustrate us?

Let us remember that our Lord Jesus loves everyone. We must do the same and love those who need our love, those who are desperate and in trouble, and even those who are downright selfish. (Please read the Parable of the Good Samaritan – Luke 10:9:37).

We should have *Agape* love – love that is for all - even our enemies.

- 6) **When our life is permeated by permanent peace and joy.** This is when the Kingdom of God has taken roots in us.

When we believe that God loves us unconditionally, deep peace and joy will pervade our entire life. We may still experience disturbances, trials, and tribulations but there is calmness and joy within us because of our faith in God. We should radiate this joy.

Jesus reveals God’s love so that His joy will be ours and our joy will be complete. *“I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete.” (John 15:11). “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).*

Joy is essential to spiritual life. Even though we are believers in God, if there is no joy, life will be meaningless and dry.

It is unchristian to be gloomy. Though we are sad because we have sinned, still there is joy because we believe that we have been redeemed.

Joy is the result of our choices. We do not have a choice as regards circumstances of our life but we have a choice as regards the way we respond to these circumstances.

When we try to remember and to thank God for whatever has happened to us, then we are choosing joy! Together with peace and love, we manifest the signs of discipleship and follow the way of the Lord.

Excerpts from Powerpoint presentation of Fr. Titus Mananzan

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