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Introduction

Sue had a powerful experience on a weekend retreat. For the first time in her life as a Catholic she encountered Christ and felt that he was real, that he knew her by name, and was calling her. She desired to open her heart and put Christ at the center of her life. The Mass came alive for her as never before. She participated with enthusiasm, really wanting to pray the responses.

Sue returned home after the retreat and continued to attend Mass at her parish. She tried to find a small group or someone to whom to talk about her experience but was unable to make any connections. She continued to go to Mass. After a few weeks, though, she began to feel the fire that burned within her dwindling. She felt discouraged and doubtful about her own experience. She knew she should probably pray but had no idea how to do it.

Sue experienced what Benedict XVI terms “an encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”¹ She underwent initial interior conversion to Christ. What needs did she have after this encounter? What happened to her in the weeks that followed that experience? Jesus’ observations in the Gospel of Matthew relate to this not uncommon story:

When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”²

Sue didn’t know how to follow Christ so she slowed on the path and began to lose sight of Christ. She did not know how to nourish her relationship with Christ through word and sacrament. She failed to find an intense Christian community like the one at the retreat. Sue didn’t know what following Christ involves, what a disciple does that leads to life in him. Sue needed a laborer. She needed someone to intentionally befriend her and apprentice her into the Christian life.

The Church calls this necessary step in the whole process of evangelization “initiatorial catechesis” and describes it in this way:

The “moment” of catechesis is that which corresponds to the period in which conversion to Jesus Christ is formalized, and provides a basis for first adhering

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, I, 2006.

² Matthew 9: 36-38

to him. Converts, by means of “a period of formation, an **apprenticeship** in the whole Christian life”, are initiated into the mystery of salvation and an evangelical style of life. This means “initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life [emphasis added]”.³

As an apprentice in Christian life, your discipleship partner needs this special period of time the Church describes above to receive individual care and help learning the ways of Christ. This apprenticeship makes possible the joyful evangelical life Sue tasted during initial conversion, but could not find again.

Often someone like Sue either falls back into her pre-conversion style of life, or becomes involved in church leadership too soon, not having had the opportunity to grow and mature before becoming a worker and leader. Just as Jesus saw the necessity for shepherds who could guide and care for his sheep, so the Church recognizes how crucial initiatory catechesis is,

Initiatory catechesis is thus the necessary link between missionary activity which calls to faith and pastoral activity which continually nourishes the Christian community. This is not, therefore, an optional activity, but basic and fundamental for building up the personality of the individual disciple, as it is for the whole Christian community. Without it, missionary activity lacks continuity and is sterile, while pastoral activity lacks roots and becomes superficial and confused: any misfortune could cause the collapse of the entire building.⁴

The Church has special need now for workers to respond to the call of Jesus to “go and make disciples.” The Holy Spirit has called you to labor for and with Christ so that his sheep can receive guidance and encouragement. He has given you zeal for the work of evangelization and the love and patience of the Good Shepherd who cares deeply for his sheep and wants to see them grow and flourish.

The Scriptures witness to the personal sacrifice and love that one-on-one ministry requires as well as the rewards. In his first letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul writes, “we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.”⁵

Thank you for responding to the Holy Spirit’s call to help his people become disciples.

³ Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, paragraph 63, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C., 1997.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵ 1 Thessalonians 2: 7-8

These materials are designed to support you in this great task. The following sections will explain the materials and coach you in using this guide. Your booklet is the same as your discipleship partner's except for the introduction, the italicized notes to you, the leader, and the sections before the Week 1. None of these appear in the discipleship partner's booklet. Other than this the leader's guide and the discipleship partner's guide both have all the same text and questions.



Life in Christ - Being a Child of God

Week 2

*“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:
everything old has passed away;
see, everything has become new!”*

2 Corinthians 5: 17

Leader: By this time it would be best if your one-on-one meetings could take place in a private room or other location conducive to deeper, focused conversation. Praying aloud together and discussing faith topics is personal and private. People are often more at ease and willing to pray aloud or share intimately if they're certain they cannot be overheard or observed.

Opening Prayer

Introduction

Leader: Please ask the discipleship partner to read the following paragraphs aloud.

In the last session we discussed “initial” conversion as an important moment in the process of faith and conversion. As was stated, “this ‘fundamental option’ is the basis for the whole Christian life of the Lord’s disciple.” The word disciple comes from the Latin word for student. Jesus’ followers were his students. That means we too have to ask: How do we live as a student of Jesus? What does a disciple do?

Becoming a disciple of Christ does not happen accidentally, but intentionally and purposefully. As we read in Week 2 from the [General Directory for Catechesis](#), “Abandonment of self to Jesus Christ arouses in believers a desire to know him more profoundly and to identify with him. Catechesis initiates them in knowledge of faith and apprenticeship in the Christian life...” To become a disciple, we need help in being intentional!

Throughout Christian history those who wanted to become Jesus’ disciples or learn more about following him apprenticed themselves to those who had walked further on the Way. This apprenticeship in the Christian life is essential in the process of becoming a disciple. We must be as intentional about it as we would anything else we want to accomplish, or it won’t happen. A wanna-be plumber must learn how to run copper tubing, operate a torch, and install a sink. That is why he apprentices with a plumbing professional. How else can he learn? So, too, must we humble ourselves to learn the way of the disciple of Jesus.

1. What do you think an apprenticeship as a disciple of Christ would look like?
2. What practices, habits, and mindsets do you think would make up your apprenticeship?
3. How would you learn what a disciple does?
4. What situations could you seek out or establish to help you try to do those things, too?

The Wheel

Leader: Here you will present the Wheel to give your discipleship partner a grid for what the upcoming sessions will cover. In language natural to you, explain how Christ being the hub or center of the Wheel represents Christ becoming the center of our lives through initial and ongoing interior conversion. Scripture passages follow that teach us how we are made new in Christ and how through him we have become sons and daughters of God. We pray that these truths would help us to better walk in the truth of who we are and help us to fall more personally in love with God who loved us so much that he sent his Son so that we might become his children.

Briefly point out the other aspects and habits that make up the Wheel. If they had mentioned any of these aspects earlier in your discussion on Christian apprenticeship, you will want to tie that in here. You will discuss the parts of the Wheel in greater detail (i.e., why they're placed where they are, etc.) in the upcoming sessions. For now, it's important to note that Christ at the center of the Wheel represents Christ at the center of our lives. That is what you will talk about today.



Scripture for Memorization

Leader: The Scripture passages for memorization in each session correspond with the habit or aspect of discipleship of the Wheel. At the least, ask your partner to read aloud these verses that go with the Wheel. If your discipleship partner seems up to the challenge, encourage them to memorize one or both of these verses each week. You can offer to do it with them if you haven't done much Scripture memorization. Time isn't an issue because it is a discipline that can be done as you walk between classes. Encourage your discipleship partner to do this daily so that the Word seeps in to their hearts and minds, rather than rushing to memorize before your meeting. Checking in on verses and sharing fruits of Scripture memorization adds a great dimension to mentoring. It grounds you and them in the Word of God!

2 Corinthians 5:17

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Reading

Leader: You have just introduced the Wheel and talked about the need to be intentional about becoming Christ's disciple. Now we're changing the angle of this reflection by talking about divine filiation, our relationship as sons and daughters of the Father, God. This reflection makes sense here because Jesus is the Way to the Father. He came to bring us to the Father and to invite us into communion, a blessed friendship with the Trinity. Getting closer to Jesus brings us close to the Father. As disciples of Jesus, we walk in this world as beloved, children of God. This truth is part of the foundation of the hub of the Wheel (Christ the Center).

Leader: Ask the discipleship partner to read the following introduction and Scripture passage aloud.

As a disciple of Christ, understanding your identity as a child of God and trying to live as a child of God is foundational for living as “new creations” and continuously allowing the old to pass away (2 Corinthians 5:17). St. Paul's letter to the Romans explains this

gift we receive through Christ - our divine “filiation.” (Filius is Latin for “son,” filia for “daughter.” “Filiation” describes our relationship as sons and daughters of God, our loving Father through Christ, who made us children of God.) Knowledge of filiation can be the source of the courage it takes to live as “new creations.”

Romans 8: 14-17

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

1. **We might think of God our Father in terms of the perfect, ideal mother and father, combined into one though immeasurably greater than we can imagine. What attributes do ideal parents have? Have you thought of God being the one who fulfills this ideal? How does this affect your image of God?**
2. **Have you ever thought of yourself as a beloved daughter of God or a beloved son of God? What does that description of who you are in relation to God mean for you?**
3. **St. Paul describes the spirit of adoption that we have received from Christ in contrast to the spirit of slavery or fear. What do you think it would be like to be a slave in a house in ancient Israel or Rome as opposed to a son or daughter? What based on that would you say are the characteristics of a spirit of slavery? Why do you think St. Paul describes being a daughter and son of God in this way?**
4. **Have you ever felt enslaved or fearful? What was that like? How can a person’s relationship as son or daughter of God through Christ change the nature of these struggles?**
5. **St. Paul clearly identified and experienced himself as a beloved son of God. We can hear in the text that he himself had cried out to God – “Abba, Father” - probably in times of suffering. (He makes no secret of his trials, especially in 2 Corinthians.) Jesus also modeled this for us before his death as he cried out**

to God, the Father: “Abba, why have you forsaken me?” What are some ways of relating intimately to God? What are some ways God might be inviting you to relate more intimately with Him?

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Leader: The following readings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church will spur further reflection on this concept of divine filiation.

305 Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children’s smallest needs: “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” . . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”¹

The following from the Catechism of the Catholic Church reflects on “Give us this day our daily bread” from the Our Father.

2830 “Our bread”: The Father who gives us life cannot but give us the nourishment life requires - all appropriate goods and blessings, both material and spiritual. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insists on the filial trust that cooperates with our Father’s providence. He is not inviting us to idleness, but wants to relieve us from nagging worry and preoccupation. Such is the filial surrender of the children of God:

To those who seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he has promised to give all else besides. Since everything indeed belongs to God, he who possesses God wants for nothing, if he himself is not found wanting before God.²

- 1. What struck you from these paragraphs?**
- 2. Why are children used as a good example of abandonment and trust?**
- 3. How does anxiety and worry affect you? How does it affect your relationships? How does it affect your relationship with God?**

¹ Matthew 6: 31-33; cf. 10:29-31.

² St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 21: PL 4, 534A.

4. How can we begin to surrender ourselves and trust God, Our Father? Besides God's grace working this in us, what are some practical steps we can take to live a life of trust and surrender?
5. Can you think of people in your life who model this filial trust and surrender?

Closing Prayer