

Are you a disciple of Christ?

In this 14th Chapter of Luke that has been proclaimed these last three weeks Our Blessed Lord has made clear some of the requirements to inherit the Kingdom of God, and without excuses: virtues like humility, compassion for the poor and the forgotten, sacrificial generosity, and today to reject the things of the world in order to receive the Spirit of God.

“Christianity is not child’s play” according to St. Cornelius Lapide, “but rather a difficult job for grown men, requiring great gifts of grace and much strength of purpose and vigor of mind”. Given the life of Christ: what he sacrificed for us in order to open the gates of heaven to us, why shouldn’t it be this way?

Are we his disciples?

Discipleship demands choosing between the things of the world and the things of heaven; from an emotional or physical attachment to our possessions, relationships or anything in this life that doesn’t last, and a spiritual yearning for the eternal. Disciples choose between merely following Christ, or striving to be holy, like Christ.

We need to constantly remind ourselves the purpose of this life is not to gain the world and its pleasure. Some of course can be for good use. Our goal is heaven, and the way to inherit it is to animate our souls with the Spirit of Christ. Otherwise, how can we be like him?

“Remember, Christian” writes St. Leo, “the surpassing worth of the wisdom that is yours. Bear in mind the kind of school in which you are to learn your skills and the rewards to which you are called”. The reward is heaven, and the school is the Spiritual life-the school of the disciple, whose wisdom teaches us to build up treasure in heaven by exchanging the things of this world for those of eternity.

Think about the time we spend on ourselves: our bodies, possessions, relationships, jobs and passions. Now think about the time we spend on our prayer life. If it is our soul and not our body that gazes upon Our Lord face to face upon death, what are we doing to make it holy and blameless in his sight? Do we have a beatific vision and a plan for living it?

The Daily Roman Missal, if you don’t have one you may want to get one, outlines an ideal Spiritual Game Plan. “The practice of piety throughout the day will help you to have a divine contemplative life in the midst of your daily routine. The habitual performance of these acts will be the foundation for growing in Christian virtues, so that you will live as a child of God”.

A Spiritual Game Plan properly orders and balances a life of prayer, self-denial and sanctifying work. We all have schedules and very real responsibilities in our lives, and they are

demanding of our time and effort. But do you have a plan that attends to the needs of your soul? If you do, are adjustments needed? Here are some things to consider.

When we arise each day, do we first make an offering to God, recognizing the day is a gift and desiring to return that gift with a virtuous life?

Are we aware of the Liturgical Calendar, the Saint whose Feast Day is celebrated and praying for their intercession? Are we aware of the First Friday devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or the First Saturday devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? Praying the Liturgy of the Hours is a beautiful practice, and one the Church encourages the laity to do.

Do we spend some time each day in prayer and sacred silence, if possible before the Blessed Sacrament? Do we pray the Angelus at 6am, noon or 6 pm to recall the Incarnation of Christ and Our Blessed Mother's role in our salvation? Are we praying the Rosary daily, meditating on the life of our Lord through the eyes of his Mother?

Are we prioritizing the daily reading of Sacred Scripture or the writings of the saints? Are we offering our work to God and asking him to sanctify it and raise it to a higher dignity than just gutting it out for a paycheck? Do we make a nightly examination of Conscience, recognizing our failings and making an Act of Contrition and firm amendment to do better the next day?

Are we **centering our weekly activities around the Sunday Mass**, which **IS** the Lord's day, arriving early enough to spend time in silence and contemplation and doing the same after giving thanks to God for the gift of the Holy Mass and the Eucharist? Are we making a weekly Hour Holy in Adoration?

Are we frequenting the Sacrament of Confession, using God's healing grace to work consciously at changing behavior that doesn't reflect that of a disciple of Christ?

Have you considered making a yearly retreat, preferably a silent one? A time just for you and God alone without any distractions?

Are we fasting on a regular basis, either as a penance for over indulgence, for the benefit of our souls or a sacrifice for the benefit of others?

Are we taking all our burdens, sorrows and sufferings and affixing it to his Cross like he commands us, offering it for our sins and the sins of the world like he did? Are we grateful for his blessings and sharing them with those around us, especially the poor?

And finally, brothers and sisters, the last question the Spiritual Game Plan asks is are we trying to live as we would like to die? Because we shall die as we have lived.

No, Christianity is not child's play, and indeed a difficult job requiring great gifts of grace and much strength of purpose and vigor of mind. It is hard work; really hard work. But the reward, oh the reward! A soul filled with the Spirit of Christ himself.....and Heaven.

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