



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 2019

How can I be more 'A Disciple of Christ' in my own life?

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Just past the midpoint of Advent, we all have been provided an initial time of fruitful preparation for the coming of Christ into our hearts and homes. As we look toward the end of Advent and the coming of Christmas, the call to become "*A Disciple of Christ*" in a new way should come to mind each day. This Advent, the Diocese of Venice launched a campaign to be "*A Disciple of Christ*," to invite Christ in a personal and transformative way into our hearts that leads us to follow Him intentionally and willfully. At this time, it is fitting to find newness in our relationship with Christ, to ask oneself, "How can I be more 'A Disciple of Christ' in my own life'?"

This beginning allows each of us a fresh start as well as a focal point which, of course, is Christ Himself. In the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, "He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows." This is what it means to both become and to be a disciple, since it is Christ that we desire and His love that we know. It is never too late to begin anew, to follow Christ and invite Him into our hearts.

The Season of Advent began with the focus on the Second Coming of Christ, when He comes in glory to judge the living and the dead. The portion of the Season which we are entering now sets its gaze on the first coming, the coming of the Christ Child. With roughly a week left of Advent and in view of the quickly approaching Christmas Season, why not up our game? Make the most of the opportunity of preparation for the coming of the Christ Child into our own lives. Our beginning points may be different, as St. Gregory told us, but we continue to move from beginning to beginning so that Christ may be born in our hearts again and again.

The Gospel of Luke tells us of the Archangel Gabriel's announcement of the coming of Christ. Mary, in a special way, displays what it means to be a disciple, and she is, in fact, the first "*Disciple of Christ*." When she hears the Word of God spoken to her, she responds in faith, exclaiming, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (cf. Luke 1:38).

This is the essence of living the Gospel: "may it be done to me according to your word"; it is an acceptance and a response to God. In this way, all ought to be "*A Disciple of Christ*," eager to receive His call and respond with love and faith. Then let us act and boldly allow Christ to take precedence in our lives in every respect.

Another example to be taken from this is the hearing and listening to God's Word. How often do we allow the Bible to collect dust on the coffee table or on a bookshelf? Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice, He knows them, and they follow Him (cf. John 10:27). In this Season of preparation and in the following Season of Christmas, open your Bible with your family. "Take and read" as the Lord spoke to St. Augustine. In this you will find the "words of eternal life" (cf. John 6:68) present in Our Lord who is "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (cf. John 14:6) and you will know what it means to be "*A Disciple of Christ*."

Looking toward the end of Advent and preparing for the coming of the Christ Child, be always aware of His Second Coming; be prepared to meet Christ as a disciple. Recognize the ways that He gives His love and respond to that love!

I wish you a fruitful remainder of the Advent Season and indeed a very Blessed and Merry Christmas! Know that you are in my prayers and please keep me in your prayers as we prepare for the coming of Christ into our hearts so as to be "*A Disciple of Christ*."

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ 

+ Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of the Diocese of
Venice in Florida

FJD/mm