

My dear friends in Christ,

Hope that you had a wonderful week despite the pandemic. When is this going to end? Yesterday (November 9) we heard that we are back to red tier once again in our county. With flu season coming up and with our carelessness and irresponsible attitude dealing and living with this Coronavirus pandemic, it will be a while I believe before we can get out from this. Personally, I am still going through a traumatic experience from last Thursday's home invasion in our rectory. I was face to face with death! It was a terrifying and agonizing experience. It could've been a different ending for me. Our living room was ransacked as they were looking for something. They kicked open the door of the storage room. But the biggest one was when the guy kicked my bedroom door. And there I was at the receiving end face to face with the guy. I am glad that I was not hurt physically. However emotionally and mentally, I am still dealing with it. I know it will take a while before this feeling will go away. I am very thankful with all your prayers, love, and support. What is keeping me strong also is the captivating and very colorful autumn season.

In our meeting with Bishop Barber yesterday, he talked about the importance of prayer especially during this time of pandemic. More importantly he said that we need to do this as part of our everyday experience that will lead us to stewardship and to discipleship. Everything starts with understanding the concept of stewardship. Stewardship is a concept in which we believe that everything that we have comes from God. With this understanding, we are asked to return a portion of what God has given us in thanksgiving through these three things: TIME, TALENT and TREASURE! The gospel this Sunday is about these things. And one of the biggest challenges of stewardship is how to grow in being a disciple of Christ!

What is discipleship?

Jesus said to his disciples,

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his cross and come after cannot be my disciple (Lk14:26-27).

The thought of "hating" one's family and one's own life might appear to be at odds with Jesus' all-embracing command to love. But in this case, Jesus was using a form of exaggeration that was common in his language at that time. Hate in this sense means to prefer less. By using this word, Jesus was stressing a point that "disciples" must renounce anyone or anything that stands in the way of a complete dedication to him. Our commitment must be deliberate!

This passage has a complete picture of discipleship! No doubt about it! It says that discipleship begins with belief. Its beginning is the moment when we accept what Jesus says was true: all that he says about the love of God, all that he says about sin, and all that he says about the real meaning of life.

Discipleship means constantly remaining in the word of Jesus. First, it involves constant listening to the word of Jesus. Fr. Raymond Brown, one of the greatest scripture scholars, said that "the Christian is the one who listens to the voice of Jesus all his/her life and will not make any decision until he/she has first heard what Jesus has to say."

Second, true discipleship is learning in order to do, to act. This is not always the case. That's why when Jesus told his disciples that he "was going to Jerusalem" to face his suffering and death, Peter reacted with fear and selfishness. Peter knew the implication of that statement. "God forbid!" he said. But Jesus had to fulfill his work, his mission as the Messiah.

So what is discipleship?

I believe that true discipleship is about sacrifice! It is about "denying our very self and taking up our cross!" It is about dying with Christ and for Christ! Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a great German theologian, once said, "When Christ calls us to follow him, he calls us to die," A priest friend of mine once said that "we are in the dying business." It means that we need to die from our fears, arrogance, selfishness, and darkness to be able to carry the cross of love, charity, service, compassion, and forgiveness. St. Augustine "died" when he decided to follow Christ. His whole life changed, and he was no longer the man he had been. We know that he became one of the most influential thinkers of the Church.

True Christianity, true discipleship is not just being here on Sundays and that's it. It takes more than that. It means going beyond our comfort zone. It means a little or great sacrifice on our part. It means being able to carry the cross of love and service and charity to the ends of the earth. It is about dying with Christ and for Christ!

Again, thank you for your unconditional support especially during this time. For those who are not yet aware, WE ARE NOW OPEN for indoor masses.

Saturday: 5pm, 7pm (Spanish Mass)

Sunday: 8, 10, 12nn (Outdoor-School Yard), 5:30pm.

Weekday mass at 9am. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament every Friday from 8:15 to 8:50am. Check our website: [sjcpinole.church](http://sjcpinole.church) for updates and information.

Next Sunday, we will gather for the Solemnity of Christ the King! The king who saves and not enslaves!

May God bless you always!

In Christ,

Fr. Geoffrey