

## Catholic Discipleship

Unit 1: Exploring the Issue

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### Opening Prayer

O Holy Spirit of God, take me as your disciple. Guide me, illuminate me, sanctify me. Bind my hands that they may do no evil. Cover my eyes that they may see it no more. Sanctify my heart, that evil may not dwell within me. Be my guard. Be my guide.

Wherever you lead me, I will go. Whatever you forbid me, I will renounce. Whatever you command me, in your strength I will do. Lead me, then, to the fullness of your truth. Amen.

- Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, 1809-1892

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### Orientation

- ▶ The twelve units of *Catholic Discipleship* will help us explore dimensions of what it means to be a missionary disciple in the Church today.
- ▶ Each unit has an essay section, a spiritual exercise section, and a Scripture passage with reflection questions.
- ▶ Please read the essay section before each meeting.
- ▶ We will do the spiritual exercises together.
- ▶ We will use the Scripture as part of our prayer.

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### Objectives

- ▶ To open basic questions about Catholic experience today
- ▶ To begin to explore the question of discipleship
- ▶ To learn why the idea has emerged in recent history
- ▶ To look at the sacramental basis of discipleship, especially Baptism and the Eucharist

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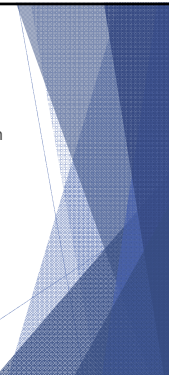
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### Some Background

- ▶ We have been through a huge transition as a Church, from mostly ethnic small-town or urban parish communities to acculturated Catholics living in suburbs. Some Latino and Asian communities experience a more ethnic community, but most Catholics do not.
- ▶ We are also experiencing a severe drop in church participation, especially in terms of younger generations.
- ▶ But millions of Catholics in the US still do practice their faith on a regular basis, and many young families attend church with their children.

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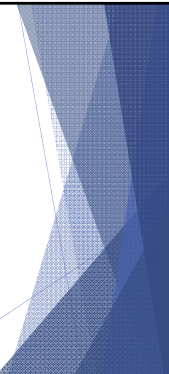
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### Popes

- ▶ St. John XXIII—Vatican II—pilgrim people serving together to accomplish the mission of Jesus
- ▶ St. Paul VI—said “evangelization is the basic mission of the Church”
- ▶ St. John Paul II—talked about the “New Evangelization”
- ▶ Pope Benedict XVI—called for a synod on the New Evangelization, which met in 2012
- ▶ Pope Francis—calls us to be “missionary disciples”

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**Basic Question**

Are Catholics called to be **disciples**?  
Is this something new for us?

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**Receiving Holy Communion**

- ▶ Before St. Pius X (reigned 1903-1914), Catholics received Communion, for the most part, once or twice a year.
- ▶ He called for frequent reception of Holy Communion.
- ▶ He also allowed children to receive communion from the age of "reason" (usually accounted as 7) when they could recognize the difference between ordinary bread and Holy Communion.
- ▶ Some parishes that gave Communion 400 times in 1905 gave Communion 15,000 times in 1925.

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**Questions**

What does the frequent reception of Holy Communion do to the attitudes of everyday Catholics in terms of their feeling like followers of Christ?

What does the call of Vatican II that we be full, conscious, and active participants at Mass imply for Catholics?

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### Baptism—Vatican II

The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Therefore all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.

- Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, #10

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### Quick Poll

If someone on Sunday asked how many in our congregation saw themselves as disciples, how many do you think would raise their hands?

- 10%
- 25%
- 50%
- 75% or more

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### Possible Catholic Attitudes on Discipleship

- ▶ Catholics have received the sacraments but are not evangelized or catechized.
- ▶ Catholics learn their catechism but are not evangelized.
- ▶ Catholic formation, for youth or adults, does not produce intentional disciples.
- ▶ Catholics go through some of the motions, but they've never committed themselves to a personal relationship with Christ.
- ▶ Practicing Catholics live as disciples but have not been trained to recognize this in their lives.

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**Catholics and Scripture**

At Church on Sundays, Catholics are regularly asked some pointed questions from the Scriptures, particularly the Gospels. Although we do not state our responses out loud, we are responding in our hearts. Here are some questions from Jesus... What would Catholics say?

- ▶ Who do you say that I am? (Matthew 16:13)
- ▶ Will you also depart from me? (John 6:67)
- ▶ You, come! Follow me. (Matthew 9:9)

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**Spiritual Exercise (p. 5)**

- ▶ Spend a few moments with this exercise in which you find yourself suddenly talking with Jesus.
- ▶ Reflect for 5-10 minutes, and begin writing your thoughts. You do not have to complete this exercise now.
- ▶ Share for one minute with the person next to you what this exercise evoked in you as you were trying to do it.

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**Scripture—Matthew 16:13-16**

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

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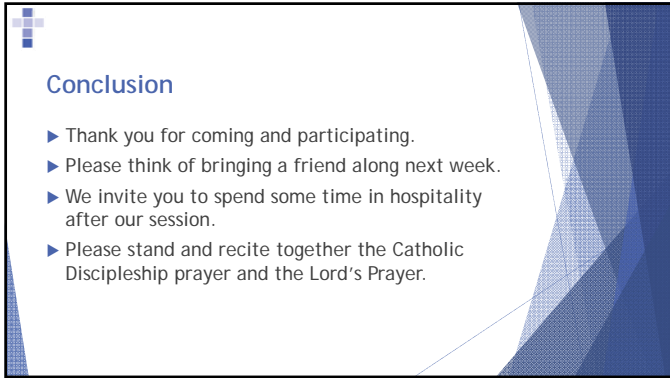
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### Conclusion

- ▶ Thank you for coming and participating.
- ▶ Please think of bringing a friend along next week.
- ▶ We invite you to spend some time in hospitality after our session.
- ▶ Please stand and recite together the Catholic Discipleship prayer and the Lord's Prayer.

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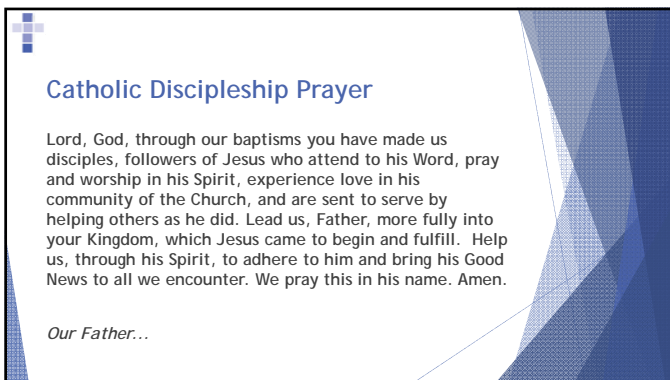
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### Catholic Discipleship Prayer

Lord, God, through our baptisms you have made us disciples, followers of Jesus who attend to his Word, pray and worship in his Spirit, experience love in his community of the Church, and are sent to serve by helping others as he did. Lead us, Father, more fully into your Kingdom, which Jesus came to begin and fulfill. Help us, through his Spirit, to adhere to him and bring his Good News to all we encounter. We pray this in his name. Amen.

*Our Father...*

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