


Catholic Discipleship

Unit 3: Personal Encounter




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.

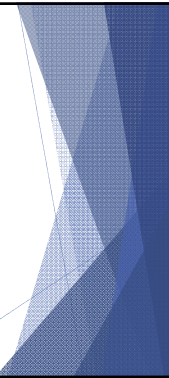
Wherever you lead me, I will go. Whatever you forbid me, I will renounce. Whatever you command me, in your strength I will do. Lead me, then, to the fullness of your truth. Amen.

- Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, 1809-1892



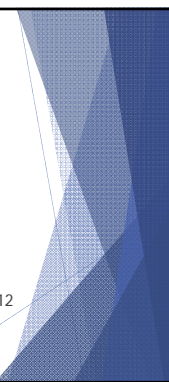
Orientation

- ▶ 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.




Objectives

- ▶ To get familiar with the word "encounter"
- ▶ To see how this word is being used in Church documents
- ▶ To explore the sense of "personal encounter with Jesus"
- ▶ To examine the various ways Catholics do experience encounter as part of their faith life
- ▶ To look at the different nuances in our encounters in life



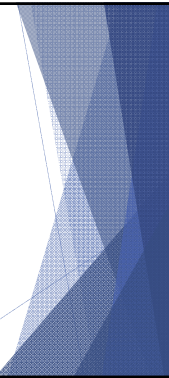
"Encounter"

- ▶ Part of the language of "On Catechesis in our Time" (St. John Paul II, 1979)
- ▶ Incorporated into the General Directory for Catechesis
- ▶ Used by St. John Paul II when he issued "Ecclesia in America"—from the meeting of the bishops of North and South America in 2000
- ▶ Part of the language of the "On the New Evangelization" synod called for by Pope Benedict and held in Rome in 2012
- ▶ A major theme from Pope Francis in "The Joy of the Gospel" (2013)




Encounter

- ▶ "Catechesis in our Time": Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ... (#5).
- ▶ General Directory for Catechesis: The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps. Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus...(#53).



Encounter

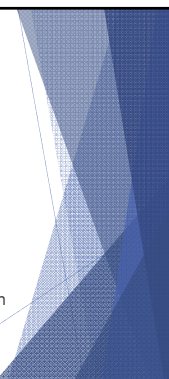
- ▶ "Ecclesia in America": This presence of the Risen One in the Church makes it possible for us to encounter him, thanks to the invisible working of his life-giving Spirit. This encounter takes place in the faith received from and lived in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ (#68).
- ▶ Synod on New Evangelization: [The] New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith calls all believers to renew their faith and their personal encounter with Jesus in the Church, to deepen their appreciation of the truth of the faith and joyfully to share it (Proposition 57).



Catholic Attitudes

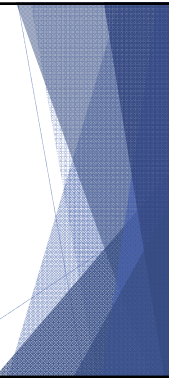
"I don't wear my faith on my sleeve."

- ▶ How do Catholics talk to other Catholics about faith? Is it easy or hard? When do Catholics do this most readily?
- ▶ How do Catholics talk to other people about their Catholic faith? Is this something regular or something mostly rare?
- ▶ What makes Catholics uneasy about showing their faith?



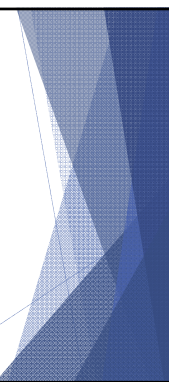
Experiences of Encounter

- ▶ From our devotional lives (prayer, Adoration, reciting Psalms, days of recollection)
- ▶ From my experience of "community" in the Catholic Church—fellow parishioners, small groups, service groups, the people gathered on Sunday
- ▶ From my experience of the saints as our older brothers and sisters in the faith
- ▶ From the sacred items that give us a sense of contact with God and the holy—rosaries, candles, holy water, prayer books, medals



Experiences of Encounter

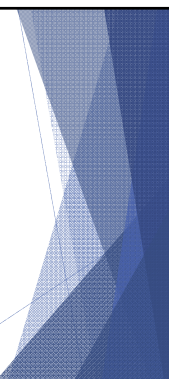
- ▶ Family life, the life of my closest friends: how do these help me get a sense of personally encountering Jesus?
- ▶ The Sacraments, especially the Mass: how do these foster a sense of personal encounter with Jesus?



Levels of Encounter

- ▶ Acquaintances
- ▶ Service people at the store or in an office
- ▶ Professional people who relate to me—doctors, counselors, religious, clergy
- ▶ My circle of friends
- ▶ My closest friends
- ▶ My family

On what level does Jesus want to encounter us?



Encounters With Jesus

We can think of our Catholic life, in the end, as a way to have a succession of encounters with Jesus. In some way, every aspect of Catholic life involves encountering Christ, or his Word, or his Church, in his Spirit. We shortchange ourselves and the power of our Catholic faith by not recognizing just how personal and involved we have become with Jesus, and how much Jesus opens our lives to a renewed vision of God, and a powerful life in the Spirit (p. 20).

Spiritual Exercise (p. 21)

"The Christian faith is above all conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person, and the decision to walk in his footsteps. Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ making, of oneself a disciple of him" (General Directory for Catechesis, #53).

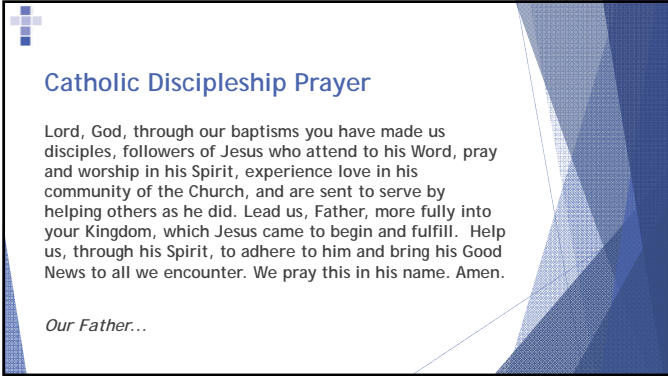
- > Explore the word "adhere"—to "stick to" something.
- > In what way do you think this word is reflective of your relationship with Jesus?
- > In what way does it reflect Jesus' relationship with you?

Scripture—John 1:35-42

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

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.
- ▶ In a couple of weeks we will start looking at the Bible, so please be sure you have one handy. If you are looking for a new Bible, you should choose one that has a lot of footnotes. Talk to me after our session for specific suggestions.
- ▶ Please stand and recite together the Catholic Discipleship prayer and the Lord's Prayer.



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...
