



The Marks of Discipleship

*Sunday Worship, Daily Prayer, Studying the Scriptures, Sharing One's Faith,
the Stewardship of Time, Talent and Treasure and Reconciliation*

In the fall of 2005, the Pastoral Council and Pastoral Staff devoted time to reading and discussing the book "Power Surge" by Michael Foss. This book encourages pastoral leaders and their congregations to become more alive, responsible and reflective of the call to discipleship in their lives.

In December of that same year, after much discussion and careful planning, the Cathedral parish began a year-long process to build our faith community into one of hospitality and care, becoming the Hands, the Heart, and the Feet of Christ through our love and compassion for one another nurtured by our personal commitment to the Marks of Discipleship.

What was first envisioned as a "year-long process", has in these past ten years, become the touchstone for all our parish programs and activities including our strategic plan: "Growing Together as Disciples" and our annual "Discipleship Celebration", spotlighting the work of our parish commissions and volunteer ministries.

The focus of the Archdiocesan Synod held Pentecost weekend, 2014. The goal of the Synod was to re-energize Catholics in their faith and inspire a "new evangelization" within the Church of southeastern Wisconsin. Participants identified three areas of pastoral priorities: Catholic Identity, Evangelization, and Stewardship. The final result of the Synod discussions and deliberations is the new pastoral plan for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee entitled "Ignite - Renew - Energize: Proclaim Christ and Make Disciples through the Sacramental Life of the Church".

The Marks of Discipleship provide us with a framework to help each of us deepen our relationship with the Lord and share the joy of the Gospel – evangelize, through the actions of our lives.

✦ Sunday Worship - The Eucharist is the "Source and Summit" of our lives.

Weekly Sunday worship is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple. It is through the Eucharist that the work of our redemption is accomplished and we are enabled to express in our lives the mystery of Christ. (*The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, paragraph 2)

✦ Daily Prayer – Prayer is a conversation with God enabling us to grow in our relationship with the Lord. It includes praising and thanking God for all our gifts; asking God for all we need to live faith-

filled lives; praying for forgiveness of our sins; remembering others in prayer. Prayer includes vocal prayer, meditation or contemplation. Prayer can be rooted in scripture or a particular devotion. Praying can happen anywhere, in traffic, in church, while folding clothes, while sitting in a quiet spot and centering oneself on the presence of God in one's life.

✦ **Studying the Scriptures** – To unleash the power of the Scriptures in our lives, we need to study them. Using a study Bible, such as The Catholic Bible, Personal Study Edition or taking part in scripture discussion and study groups is one way to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the Bible in our lives. When the Word is proclaimed at Mass, God speaks to us today.

✦ **Sharing One's Faith** – One mark of a disciple is to be able to share one's faith. This can happen in many ways. Sharing the meaning of the Scriptures in small groups is one way. Having a Spiritual Director is another way. Developing "spiritual friendships" where one can easily talk about faith is another way. Sharing one's faith deepens one's belief and ability to live consciously as a disciple.

✦ **Stewardship of Time, Talent and Treasure** – Disciples serve others. Service is at the core of the Gospel message. Service includes sharing one's time to be of assistance in both Church ministry and "ministry in the world". Stewardship means sharing one's talents to build up the Church and to build a better world. Donating money or goods for the sake of contributing to the Church and the reign of God on earth is a vital part of stewardship.

✦ **Reconciliation** - Guided by the Holy Spirit, disciples reflect on the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus found in the Gospels. Desiring to grow closer to Christ Jesus, we strive to let go of patterns of sin and grow in lives of virtue. In acknowledging our own bad choices and failures, in forgiving and extending mercy to those who have wronged us, we embrace humanness – our own and other's - and open our hearts to change. Showing mercy and forgiving others in our daily lives leads us to a deeper understanding of the mercy and forgiveness God extends to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

A final thought:

As we practice *The Marks of Discipleship* we open ourselves to lives transfigured by God's presence and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves ready to proclaim the Good News of salvation, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the words of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* – The Joy of the Gospel:

"Spirit-filled evangelizers means evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the Spirit made the apostles go forth from themselves and turned them into heralds of God's wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each person in his or

her own language.

The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (parrhesía) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition. Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence." *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph 259