

Brothers and sisters,

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about the importance of being a disciple of Jesus, which we could perhaps contrast with being a mere member of the crowd. If you read the gospels and pay a little closer attention than the average reader, you'll notice that there are times when the author mentions crowds of people following and listening to Jesus and there are other times when the author mentions Jesus speaking to his disciples. It seems as though we all start out as members of "the crowd", hearing about Jesus and maybe having some curiosity about what he's doing and teaching. Then at some point, there is an impulse - a nudge from God maybe - to step out of the crowd and get to know Jesus in a deeper kind of way. I pray the Lord has been giving you some of those nudges these past few months and that you've been responding with courage to take some bold steps in your relationship with him.

This all seems to beg the question, "*How do I grow in a relationship with Jesus?*" There are a number of ways a person could approach this question, just like there are a number of ways we can grow in a relationship with anyone. That being said, there is a very common place to start found in Acts 2:42. It says the community of believers "*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*" If this is how the earliest Christians engaged in a relationship with Jesus and with each other, then this ought to be how we do the same. So, every disciple of Jesus will have at least these four elements included in his or her life: the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. You may notice, too, that these are not merely to be included in our lives, but that each of us is to be *devoted* to them. The word devotion means having love, loyalty, or enthusiasm for a person, activity, or cause. We are to be loyal and enthusiastic about these four things. We are meant to love taking part in them. Is this your experience? Maybe, maybe not. Can it become your experience? Yes!

The apostles' teaching can be found by a regular reading of the Word of God, especially the New Testament which was authored by God through some of the apostles, and the doctrines of the Church which was founded on the apostles.

Fellowship can be engaged in by spending time with other disciples of Jesus, sharing with each other your lived experience of life with Jesus and the community of his disciples.

The breaking of bread is one of the ways the early Church spoke about the Mass. You can become even more devoted to the Mass by attending even more often than only on Sundays. What's more, you can grow in your devotion to the Eucharist by engaging in Eucharistic prayer, coming to pray in the church even when it's not time for Mass, recognizing the Real Presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.

You can grow in your prayer life, making more time to spend in silence with the Holy Trinity who lives within your baptized soul. You can grow more attentive to the way God speaks to you.

Until next week.

May the Lord give you his peace!

Fr. Bryan