

Brothers and sisters,

Our topic for this weekend's column is very important, we might say it's among the most important topics and perhaps the most misunderstood: **discipleship**.

At its root, to be a disciple is to be one who learns from another. The learning is for a purpose, which is imitation. If I am a disciple of someone, I learn from that person in order that I may imitate him/her. Many of us have had this experience in very practical ways, though perhaps without calling it discipleship. How many of us were taught by our parents how to cook, work, live well, etc? Take cooking as an example. You watched closely one or both of your parents in the kitchen or at the grill. S/he might have explained to you why this or that ingredient was added. Some were told about the importance of following the details of a recipe, while others were told the importance of being able to flexibly improvise. Whatever it may have been, you learned and now you may hear people say things such as, "Wow, this reminds me of how your mom used to bake pies!" or "You grill just like your dad." Your learning from them led to imitating them. Sure, maybe you've added your own flavor, but the general approach is there. (Even if this wasn't your experience, you can grasp the concept.)

Being a disciple of Jesus is very similar, except that he offers us an entire way of life instead of a particular skill set. We come to him, learn from him, and then imitate him. Can you see how this is such an important topic? Even if you learn nothing else from these columns, I would consider it a great success if you at least learn to develop the *discipline* (notice the very close relation to the word *disciple*) of learning from and imitating Jesus. I think many of us have learned the doctrines of the Church (although I would suggest even this part has been lacking in recent years), but not many of us have been shown the incredible importance of learning the way of life that Jesus shows to us. Really, it's not merely learning the way of life, but learning *from Jesus himself* his way of life. To put it another way, many of us have not been led to have a daily, lived relationship with him.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is not some character who used to live two thousand years ago, but he is a divine person who still lives today. He wants to share life with you, much like you share life with your best friend or close family members. You have relationships with them: you call each other, text each other, visit each other, laugh and cry with each other, etc. Sometimes people begin to associate you with your best friend. Do they associate you with Jesus, too? We'll talk more next week about some practical ways to grow in this relationship and to learn from him. *In the meantime, spend some time this week considering how you would tell someone about your relationship with Jesus up to this point in your life*, whether it's a strong one, one that could use some work, or anything in between.

May the Lord give you his peace!

Fr. Bryan