

♪♪ **Only this I want: but to know the Lord
and to bear his cross, so to wear the crown he wore.
All but this is loss, worthless refuse to me,
For to gain the Lord is to gain all I need.** ♪♪

Do you want to be a disciple of Christ? Jesus says clearly, "You cannot be my disciple unless you renounce all your possessions."

The Gospel says you can't own anything, you have to put Jesus ahead of your possessions, your other relationships, even yourself, but God will give you what you need if you seek what Jesus wants. Do you believe that?

What do **we** need to do to become better followers, to become disciples, what is our discipline? The discipline of the Gospel is to be a disciple.

The words of Jesus seem pretty harsh - to be my disciple you have to **hate** your family and yourself - but that is the way people of his time spoke. He certainly got their attention! What it means in our own time is that I have to put Jesus and his values ahead of my possessions, my relationships, my family, my community, my desires and passions.

St. Francis would say that I need to give up holding on to anything or anyone, to give up any form of *possessiveness*, so that I can receive the gift of a new family, a new source of security, a new self.

In order to be disciples of Christ, we need to **look at** all our relationships - with God, with things, with people and with ourselves. We need to let go of the things that give us security, the people and things we are attached to or dependant on, and our own way - our own addiction to control.

To be a disciple of Christ I need to take up my own cross, not somebody else's. When Hurricane Irene devastated the valley where we live two years ago, in 2011, Sr. Anna and I experienced new levels of letting go - and of living our vows as religious.

The rented house where we kept our ministry materials and where I lived was filled with water, mud and debris (and it stunk). We lost most of what was in that house.

We thought we would have to stop doing the ministry we had been doing together for 11 years and leave the area. We learned a new level of poverty.

But the Spirit of God called us to a new ministry - a ministry of presence among the people who had suffered worse losses - and we obeyed, by the grace of God.

After only six months, we were able to begin to do retreats and parish missions again, and so to continue to witness to the value of partnership in ministry.

God even provided for our financial needs through totally unexpected gifts.

The cross is not a piece of wood but a slice of life.

We are called to bear the cross of *consciousness*. Philemon had to bear that cross. As Paul made him conscious that his slave, Onesimus was his brother, he did not criticize the existence of slavery, he simply undermined it in a very effective way.

In our sexually charged culture we are all called to **conscious** love relationships in community and in ministry. To refuse to treat people as objects, as things, to love for the good of other, not just for my own pleasure or comfort or security or control.

We are called to bear the cross of *obedience* - the word means "to listen to" to listen to God, rather than self. To discern the voice of God in my heart when God speaks through the needs of the poor Christ, through human authority, or the needs of the earth itself, and to refuse to obey anyone who orders us or tempts us to go against the law of love. The wisdom we heard of in the 1st reading is the gift of being able to hear God and to follow the way of Christ.

We are called to bear the cross of *Poverty*. The cross of admitting my own limits, my own powerlessness; to let go of possessing our future and even the future of our institutions. Sometimes it means to receive from others, to allow myself to be loved and to let go of the comfort of being miserable. Sometimes it means to see others in need, and to treat them as family, to realize, as St. Bernard said, the 2nd coat in your closet belongs to the poor.

If I bear the cross of consciousness, I will become conscious of how much Jesus loves me and he will give me the power to love the way he loves.

If I bear the cross of obedience, I will be led to the deepest desire of my heart, my hunger for God.

If I bear the cross of poverty, I will learn to see everything as a gift, and receive more deeply those things no one can own, like the sun, moon rain and wind, like love, peace, joy and life itself.

Where will I find this power to look, and to take up my cross?

Only from God. How can I plug in to God's grace?

Through this Eucharist, through daily prayer, through sustaining a community that cares for each other and follows Christ together.

As we move to the Eucharist, we are called to follow Jesus and to receive his very self. We touch and taste the desire of our God to feed us, to transform us into the family of Christ, to reveal to us the deepest desires of our hearts:

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Readings:

Wisdom 9:13-18a *Who can conceive what the Lord intends?*

Psalm 90 *In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.*

Philemon 9-10, 12-17 *Receive him no longer as a slave but as a beloved brother.*

Luke 14:25-33 *If you do not renounce all of your possessions you cannot be my disciples.*