

INTRODUCTION

Let us now assess our Christian journey, how we live with Christ in every situation that we encounter each day. Last week, we were reminded of how to bring ourselves into a deeper process of forming an apostle. The only thing that helps us deepen our journey is commitment. Let us take the fundamental stages of discipleship.

In the VDMFa there are three fundamental stages distinguished: initiation, discipleship and apostolic stage.

1. *Initial stage: this is the formation which the VDMFa offers to people in the first moment of contact and knowledge of the Verbum Dei charism. (School of the Word)*
2. *Discipleship stage: the formation in the discipleship stage includes the period from which the person freely wishes to commit themselves to the VDMFa until the person does a stable commitment in the VDMFa (School of the Apostles)*
3. *Apostolic stage: this stage includes in a permanent way those who have made a stable commitment in the VDMFa*

(Statutes of the VDMFa 70)

The core values of these stages are prayer and commitment. Prayer is an initial step to form us into God's apostles because it is an opening element to invoke the Holy Spirit to descend upon us and to allow us to be used in the service of God through man. It is in the service that we can bear much fruit; that is why in discipleship, commitment is the most essential factor for it does not count time, distance and situations but rather the urgency to take part of the mission which persuades the disciple to serve.

MONDAY

You are my Lord

James 2:14-18 ¹⁴ How does it help, my brothers, when someone who has never done a single good act claims to have faith? Will that faith bring salvation? ¹⁵ If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, 'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,' without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? ¹⁷ In the same way faith, if good deeds do not go with it, is quite dead. ¹⁸ But someone may say: So you have faith and I have good deeds? Show me this faith of yours without deeds, then! It is by my deeds that I will show you my faith.

Faith is essential in our following with Jesus. It does not need to announce but to practice in every single situation that we take; for faith is measured by actions. We should make sure that our decisions are pleasing to God and that our work is connected to God's design.

How is my following with Jesus? Do my thoughts and actions commensurate my faith?

TUESDAY

You are my Companion

Mark 8:27-35 ²⁷ Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' ²⁸ And they told him, 'John the Baptist, others Elijah, others again, one of the prophets.' ²⁹ 'But you,' he asked them, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' ³⁰ And he

gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. ³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of man was destined to suffer grievously, and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; ³² and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter tried to rebuke him. ³³ But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do.' ³⁴ He called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

How wonderful it is when Jesus asks us personally this question, "Who do people say that I am?" This question can be answered by us based on the depth of our relationship with Him. God does not expect us to have a perfect answer but rather based on how much we commit ourselves to Him every day.

If you were asked by Jesus with the same question, how would you answer Him?

WEDNESDAY

You are my Friend

Colossians 1:24 - 2:3 ²⁴ It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church, ²⁵ of which I was made a servant with the

responsibility towards you that God gave to me, that of completing God's message, ²⁶ the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his holy people. ²⁷ It was God's purpose to reveal to them how rich is the glory of this mystery among the gentiles; it is Christ among you, your hope of glory: ²⁸ this is the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing and instructing everyone in all wisdom, to make everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹ And it is for this reason that I labour, striving with his energy which works in me mightily.

^{NJB} **Colossians 2:1** I want you to know, then, ... **(Please continue reading in your Bibles)...**

Luke 6:39-42 ³⁹ He also told them a parable, 'Can one blind person guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit?' ⁴⁰ Disciple is not superior to teacher; but fully trained disciple will be like teacher... **(Please continue reading in your Bibles)...**

As Christians, we already know the unconditional love of Jesus. He suffered and died for us. We also need to reciprocate the love He gave. We should not look at the mistakes and failures of our brothers and sisters; instead, we have to look at our personal relationship with Him through our neighbors. Let's examine on the fundamental stages if we were able to move on spiritually but if not, let us not find ways to settle on our comfort zone. Otherwise, temptation and sin will come in and we lose our opportunity to build the Kingdom of God.

As far as the VD fundamental stages are concerned, which of these stages have I settled in?

THURSDAY

You are my Hope

Colossians 3:1-11 Since you have been raised up to be with Christ, you must look for the things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. ² Let your thoughts be on things above, not on the things that are on the earth, ³ because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ But when Christ is revealed -- and he is your life-you, too, will be revealed with him in glory. ⁵ That is why you must kill everything in you that is earthly: sexual vice, impurity, uncontrolled passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god; ⁶ it is precisely these things which draw God's retribution upon those who resist. ⁷ And these things made up your way of life when you were living among such people, ⁸ but now you also must give up all these things: human anger, hot temper, malice, abusive language and dirty talk; ⁹ and do not lie to each other. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, ¹⁰ and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator; ¹¹ and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised and uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.

God created the world for us to use it for His greater glory, yet, we misuse them because of our selfishness. We even treat them as persons and persons as

objects. God doesn't want us to be enslaved by material things for these are not essential. We have to work in accordance to the intention of our Father. Because of this, we are building treasures in heaven. At the same time, we are gradually forming ourselves to be like Christ.

What kind of treasure are you keeping now? Are they acceptable in the kingdom of heaven?

FRIDAY

You are my Savior

Colossians 3:12-17 ¹² As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. ¹⁴ Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond. ¹⁵ And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the Word of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; ¹⁷ and whatever you say or do, let it be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thanksgiving to God the Father through him.

We, the Verbum Dei disciples are called to a life of love, to love God with our whole being through others. So, we must die ourselves from self-centeredness. Let's heed to the exhortation of the Church to bring Christ

to our brothers and sisters. This can be realized if we continue to practice the Verbum Dei fundamental stages for it deepens our commitment in following Christ.

SATURDAY

You are my Life

Luke 6:20-23 ²⁰ Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said: How blessed are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours. ²¹ Blessed are you who are hungry now: you shall have your fill. Blessed are you who are weeping now: you shall laugh. ²² 'Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of man. ²³ Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, look!-your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.

Luke 6:27-31 *(Please continue reading in your Bibles)...*

Luke 6:35-36 *(Please continue reading in your Bibles)...*

A true disciple is measured through the people that surround him and through the circumstances that he is facing. If the disciple lives in prayer, he is not easily carried away by the negative forces from outside but sets aside his human desires and consequently allows gentleness, compassion and mercy to work in him.

SUNDAY

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116

2nd Reading: James 2:14-18

Gospel: Mark 8:27-35

Verbum Dei

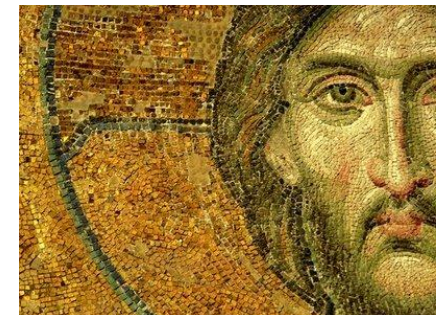
GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

“What about you, who do you say I am?”
(Mark 8:29)

September 7-13, 2015

General Theme: “The goal of our life is to be Christ.”

General Objective: To give emphasis on the process and formative way of becoming apostles in order that the disciples are made aware of where they are and what the Lord expects of each of them.



Objective of the week:

To know where I am in my being a disciple of Christ and to allow Him to train me more so that I may know him and become like Him as my Master.