

HOMILY 3RD SUN OT YRA 2017

I read in a recent survey that 75% of the population in the United States claim to be Christian. That is 3 out of every 4 people. That is 233 million people. I also read that 35 million people in this country will go to bed hungry tonight; 13 million of these are children. Having enough food to eat seems to be such a basic thing. With so many Christians in this country, how is this possible? I think maybe some people identify themselves as Christian, followers of Jesus Christ, but not committed enough that they are willing to change their lives for him. Maybe some identify themselves as Christian, but are not really disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel reading today, Jesus calls the first three disciples who ultimately will become apostles, Peter, Andrew, James and John. They immediately dropped what they were doing and followed Jesus. There is no indication that they had any prior knowledge of Jesus. Jesus must have had a great deal of charisma. They must have seen something very special in him to drop everything and follow him. In order for us today to move from being a Christian to a disciple of Jesus Christ, I think we need to see in Jesus something so special that we want to follow him, that we are willing to change our lives for him.

One of the things that I really like about Alpha, is that it helps us come to know Jesus better, to see how special he is, and to want to learn and grow as one of his disciples. Talk to someone who has been through Alpha and let them tell you about their experience. We are starting several new Alpha programs. We are already doing Alpha for middle school. We are going to start Alpha for married couples in February and Alpha for young adults very soon. Watch the bulletin and the web site for these programs.

If I were picking disciples, I am not sure I would have picked fishermen. They were poor, uneducated, without developed leadership skills, but look what they became. We are all sitting here in a large part because of them. Jesus calls ordinary people like you and I to be

disciples. We do not need any special skills or abilities; we just need to have the desire to become a disciple and a willingness to learn. God will supply the ability. A disciple is one who studies with a great teacher and grows from their study. The evidence of learning is growth. We are called to come to know Jesus. We are called to change our lives to be in line with what God is calling us to be. We are all called to love and serve others, but the way you live that out will be specific to you. We have to move from being ministered to, to ministering to others.

My guess is that there are many people who identify themselves as Christian, but do not like organized religion. We hear a lot about that these days. From the reading I have done, some people do not want to identify themselves as Catholic because they do not agree with everything the Church teaches. That is ok. Jesus always meets us where we are. You just have to be open to learning and growth. I think organize religion is really important. You may be able to live a Christian life on your own, but I think it is easier and you are more likely to be a successful disciple if you are part of an organized religion. In moving from being ministered to, to doing the ministry, organized religion gives you a structure to do it in. We can love and support one another in our efforts. And I think the Catholic Church is the best organized religion that there is. You do not have to agree with everything the Catholic Church teaches at this point to join us. We are all struggling with different issues, and the issues change at different points in our lives. We are all on a spiritual journey. None of us are finished.

Where are you on the road to being a disciple? Jesus will meet you where you are. Do you need to come to know Jesus better? Do you need to be ministered to? Is it time for you to move into the ministry or even lead the ministry? You need to decide.