

## Lesson 11: Discipleship and Mission



In the "**Great Commission**," Jesus informs his disciples about their mission (*which is also the Mission of the Church*):

***"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."***  
*(Matthew 28:19-20)*

After the Holy Spirit appeared to Peter and the apostles, they formed the early Church. Today the Church is still the sign and instrument of God's communion with all humanity. The Church unites people from around the world. We do not have to travel alone on our journey to God. The Church (*the people of God*) walks with us, teaching the truth and communicating faith. The Great Commission is Christ's mission for His Church.

Besides the Church's mission, each disciple (*including you*) is given a unique, specific mission from God. God blesses each of us with the gifts and talents needed to fulfill our particular mission. Our mission from God gives us purpose. In short, you have been designed by God with a purpose; you were made for mission. God has the ultimate plan for your life. All you need to do is follow it. You have been designed by God with a purpose. Ignore how God has designed you and you will be inviting every type of misery into your life. Embrace how God has designed you and you will experience unimaginable joy, even when things don't go your way.

The main concern in fulfilling our mission is to align ourselves with God and His plan for us. The more we align with God, the less mess, heartache, and suffering we cause. God

knows you better than anyone else. He knows you better than you know yourself. God designed you and He designed you with a specific mission in mind; you were designed on purpose and for a purpose.

If you want to discover your mission, then you need to speak to the person who gave it to you: God. God speaks to us in a variety of ways; however, there are three ordinary voices He uses to communicate with us: Legitimate Needs, Talents and Abilities, and Deepest Desire.

The first ordinary voice of God is legitimate needs. We are created with legitimate needs which are physical (*eat, air, water, sleep, clothing, etc.*), emotional (*opportunities to love and be loved*), intellectual (*education and learning*), and spiritual (*silence, prayer, sacraments, and Scriptures*). God gives us these legitimate needs to allow us to live life to the fullest. It is in our need that we experience our dependence on God.

The second ordinary voice of God is talents and abilities. God gives us whatever talents and abilities that we need to fulfill His mission for us. There are two types of talents: universal and unique. Universal talents are those that we all possess, such as the ability to make a difference in the lives of others. Unique talents are those that everyone does not have, such as the ability to sing, speak foreign languages, or play sports. The world tends to distort the importance of unique talents by assigning greater importance to certain gifts. Remember, the world takes the trivial and makes it important, and takes the important and makes it trivial. God gives each of us the gifts that we need for our mission.

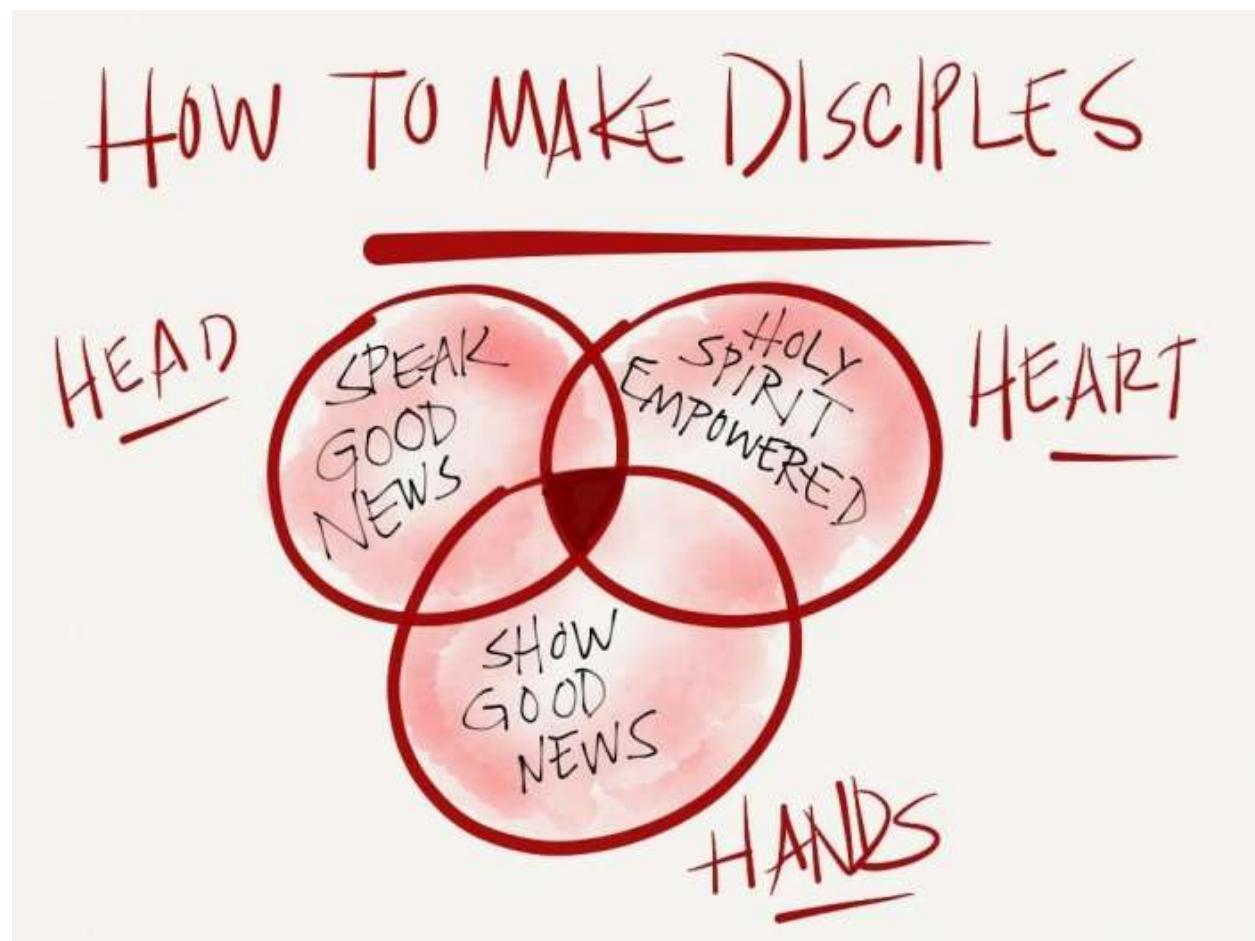
The third ordinary voice of God is deepest desire. Deep in your heart you have desires for good things, and God has placed those desires in your heart to guide you to the life He has envisioned for you. Trust in God and His plan for you and you will have all of your heart's desires. When we embrace God and His way of life, He reveals many dimensions of everyday life that we have never seen or thought about before. God is speaking to you through your deepest desires. Seek out your deepest desires for good things and have the courage to pursue them.



We are called to be modern day disciples of Jesus Christ. A disciple is one who is sent. Christ sends us out into the world to continue his mission of love: to spread the Good

News. We become the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the voice, the hands, and the feet of Christ. By opening ourselves up to Christ, we allow the glory of God to radiate through our actions. That is what a good disciple does.

To be the eyes, ears, mouth, voice, hands, and feet of our Lord is a very privileged and important mission. How do we fulfill this call of discipleship? With our head, heart, and hands. We use our “head” to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We use our “heart” to listen to and be motivated by the Holy Spirit. And we use our “hands” to perform labors of love that display the love of God in action. The following diagram puts this concept into a visual format:



Another term for discipleship in today’s world is “**Stewardship**.” Stewardship is our responsibility to use all the things that God has given to us for the betterment of the Church and others. Stewardship is a complete lifestyle, a life of total accountability and responsibility acknowledging God as Creator and Owner of all. It is living out a commitment to be Christ-centered rather than self-centered. Stewardship encompasses the “**Three T’s**”: Time, Talent, and Treasure. God blesses each of us with these Three T’s and He expects us to use them to fulfill the mission that He gives us. Stewardship is an action of gratitude, thanking God for His abundant blessings with the responsible management of His gifts to us by using them for the benefit of others. Stewardship is

about putting God first and trusting in His love and grace. We are called to give “the first and best of our fruits” to God. This means that we should give back to God (*with the very best that we have to offer*) before we think of our own needs and wants.



## **Four Principles of Biblical Stewardship**

### **1. The principle of ownership.**

Psalm 24 begins with: “*The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*” In the beginning of Genesis, God creates everything and puts Adam in the Garden to work it and to take care of it. It is clear that man was created to work and that *work is the stewardship of all of the creation that God has given him.* This is the fundamental principle of biblical stewardship. God owns everything and we are simply managers acting on His behalf. Stewardship is the commitment of one’s self and possessions to God’s service, recognizing that we do not have the right of control over our property or ourselves.

### **2. The principle of responsibility.**

*Although God gives us “all things richly to enjoy,” nothing is ours. Nothing really belongs to us. God owns everything; we’re responsible for how we treat it and what we do with it. The question is: What about your responsibilities? Owners have rights; stewards have responsibilities.* We are called as God’s stewards to manage that which belongs to God. While God has graciously entrusted us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything He owns as His stewards, we are responsible to manage His holdings well and according to His purposes.

### 3. The principle of accountability.

A steward is one who manages the possessions of another. We are all stewards of the resources, abilities and opportunities that God has entrusted to our care, and one day each one of us will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us. We will be called to give an account of how we have administered everything we have been given.

### 4. The principle of reward.

The fullness of stewardship's reward is not in this world; but it is guaranteed in heaven. Saint Paul writes: *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving"* (Colossians 3:23-24). The ultimate reward and goal of our stewardship is to hear God say to us: *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's joy!"* (Matthew 25:21).



#### Three quick ways to view the concept of Stewardship:

1. Stewardship is what we do after we say, *"I believe."* In other words, stewardship is our faith in action.
2. Stewardship is based on the individual's need to give out of gratitude, rather than the Church's need to receive—it is a spiritual way of life...a conversion process that changes lives.
3. Stewardship is Intentional, Planned, and Proportionate giving.

## The Story of the Pig and the Cow













The pig was unpopular while the cow was loved by all. This puzzled the pig, so he said to the cow, “Everyone thinks that you are generous because you give them milk and cream every day. But what about me? I give everything that I have: bacon, ham, bristles for brushes, and they even pickle my feet. Yet no one likes me. Why is that?” Then cow said, “Perhaps it is because I give while I’m still living.” The pig’s view of life was shaded in the darkness of negativity; the cow’s view was illuminated by the light of kindness. The cow understood the concept of stewardship: give when you can, as much as you can, and don’t let your generosity be soured by self-importance.



# Works of Mercy

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are another aspect of discipleship and mission. As Catholics, we bring the love and mercy of God to others by performing these works. These labors of love truly bring God's love and mercy to other people. There are seven Corporal and seven Spiritual Works of Mercy. The Corporal Works of Mercy are concerned with the material (*or physical*) needs of others; whereas, the Spiritual Works of Mercy are concerned with the spiritual needs of others. The following chart lists each of the different Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

THE WORKS OF MERCY		
CORPORAL	&	SPIRITUAL
FEED THE HUNGRY 		INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT 
GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY 		COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL 
SHELTER THE HOMELESS 		ADMONISH SINNERS 
CLOTHE THE NAKED 		FORGIVE OFFENSES 
VISIT THE SICK 		COMFORT THE AFFLICTED 
VISIT THE IMPRISONED 		BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY 
BURY THE DEAD 		PRAY FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD 

**"A BIT OF MERCY MAKES THE WORLD LESS COLD AND MORE JUST" (POPE FRANCIS)** 

Imagine just how different the world would be if everyone practiced just one work of mercy each day. How would the world be different if these works of mercy defined the way we live our lives? If you want to change the world, then you have to start by changing yourself. The works of mercy help us to change and grow; they are essential for our mission as modern day disciples of Christ.

# Vocations

Another aspect of mission and discipleship is our vocation. A **Vocation** is the call each of us has in life to be the person God wants us to be and the way we each serve the Church and the Kingdom of God. Each of us can live out his or her vocation as a layperson, as a member of a religious community, or as a member of the clergy. There are three vocations: single life, married life, and religious life. Our vocation gives us focus and direction. The word “vocation” means “call.” It’s an invitation from God to live by a certain standard. There are many ways to live your life, but God has given you a unique blend of talents, abilities, and characteristics to carry out a mission that He has assigned to you alone.



## Prayer for Vocations

God, in Baptism you called me by name  
and made me a member of your people, the Church.  
Help all your people to know their vocation in life,  
and to respond by living a life of holiness.  
For your greater glory and for the service of your people,  
raised up dedicated and generous leaders  
who will serve as sisters, priests, brothers, deacons,  
married couples, singles, and lay ministers.  
Send your Spirit to guide and strengthen me  
that I may serve your people  
following the example of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
in whose name I offer this prayer.  
Amen.



HOLINESS IS THE FIRST  
VOCATION.

HOLINESS MEANS TRYING  
TO BE LIKE JESUS.

Most people are called to marriage—to wholeheartedly love their spouse and to joyfully welcome children. The purpose of marriage is for a man and woman to help each other get to heaven, and to teach their children to do the same. Like any vocation, marriage must be discerned, not assumed.

## MARRIAGE



## PRIESTHOOD



A priest's job is to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus—primarily through preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Priests are ordained for this ministry by a bishop, who himself was ordained by a bishop, on and on for two thousand years. We call this unbroken tradition "apostolic succession."

Both men and women can join religious orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines, etc. The life and work of religious orders varies greatly—from communities that dedicate themselves to lives of prayer, to those who work actively in schools, hospitals, orphanages, etc. The "glue" that holds together religious life are the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

## RELIGIOUS LIFE



## SINGLE LIFE



Some people are called to serve God as single people, without marrying or taking special vows, but nonetheless serving the Church in a meaningful way. Single people "contribute greatly to the good of the human family" (CCC 2231). "Some live their situation in the spirit of the Beatitudes, serving God and neighbor in exemplary fashion." (CCC 1658).

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MAIN VOCATIONS

HOW IS GOD CALLING YOU?

ASIDE FROM YOUR DECISION  
TO FOLLOW JESUS,

YOUR VOCATION IS LIFE'S  
MOST IMPORTANT DECISION.

# Virtues

Virtues play a key role in discipleship. A **Virtue** is an interior disposition, a positive habit, a passion that has been placed at the service of the good. We have passions so that through strong emotions and distinct feelings we might be attracted to what is right and good and repelled from what is evil and bad. Another definition of “virtue” is: an attitude or a way of acting that enables us to do good.

Passions can be very valuable; they are designed to lead to and reinforce good actions; only when they are disordered do the passions contribute to evil. Passions that are ordered to the good become virtues. Passions that overpower us are called **vices** since they rob us of our freedom and entice us to do evil.

Virtues counter vices. St. Augustine said, “Virtue is what one does passionately; vice is what one cannot stop doing because of passion.” Virtues are like habits: they need to be practiced to be perfected.



There are three **Theological Virtues**: Faith, Hope, and Charity (*Love*). God gives us these virtues; hence they are not acquired through human effort. The Theological Virtues are deeply connected to one another. For example, we demonstrate our faith and hope through charity. The Theological Virtues help direct our lives toward God.

**Faith** is the ability to believe in God and to give our lives to him. Through the Church, the Holy Spirit shares with us the ability to believe. Faith calls us not only to believe in God but also to decide to give ourselves totally to Him. When we give our life to God, we are acting for the good of others. Faith enables us to accept all that God has revealed as true. In short, faith is the virtue that allows us to believe in God.

**Hope** is our desire for all the good things God has planned for us. It enables us to trust in God to grant us eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. Hope helps us trust that if we live according to Jesus’ teachings, we will one day enter his eternal kingdom. Hope also helps us do what pleases God, even when it is difficult or when we get discouraged. Hope is the virtue that gives us confidence that God’s plan will unfold, as it should—even if it doesn’t happen right now or in the way we expect. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives and strengthens this virtue. In short, hope is the virtue by which we desire Eternal Life as the reward for our faith and good works.

**Charity** (or Love) is the virtue we use to show our love for God. It is the virtue that enables us to love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves. When we love God, we allow Him to be at the center of our lives. We ask Him for His help in everything we say and do. We also exhibit charity in our love for other people. Jesus reminds us that often we are called to make sacrifices to show our love for all. The practice of charity, or love, brings the three Theological Virtues together in perfect harmony. This is why charity is called the “Queen of all Virtues.” Saint Paul wrote about this in his first letter to the Corinthians.

**Read about the Theological Virtues: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

The three Theological Virtues (*Faith, Hope, and Charity*) are important to our lives and our mission. They are gifts from God. Faith calls us to make a personal decision to give our lives fully to God. Hope gives us the strength to live for the Kingdom of God and to accept the Holy Spirit in our lives. Charity is the virtue that guides our actions to love God and others. Together they assist us to be the best disciples that we can be.



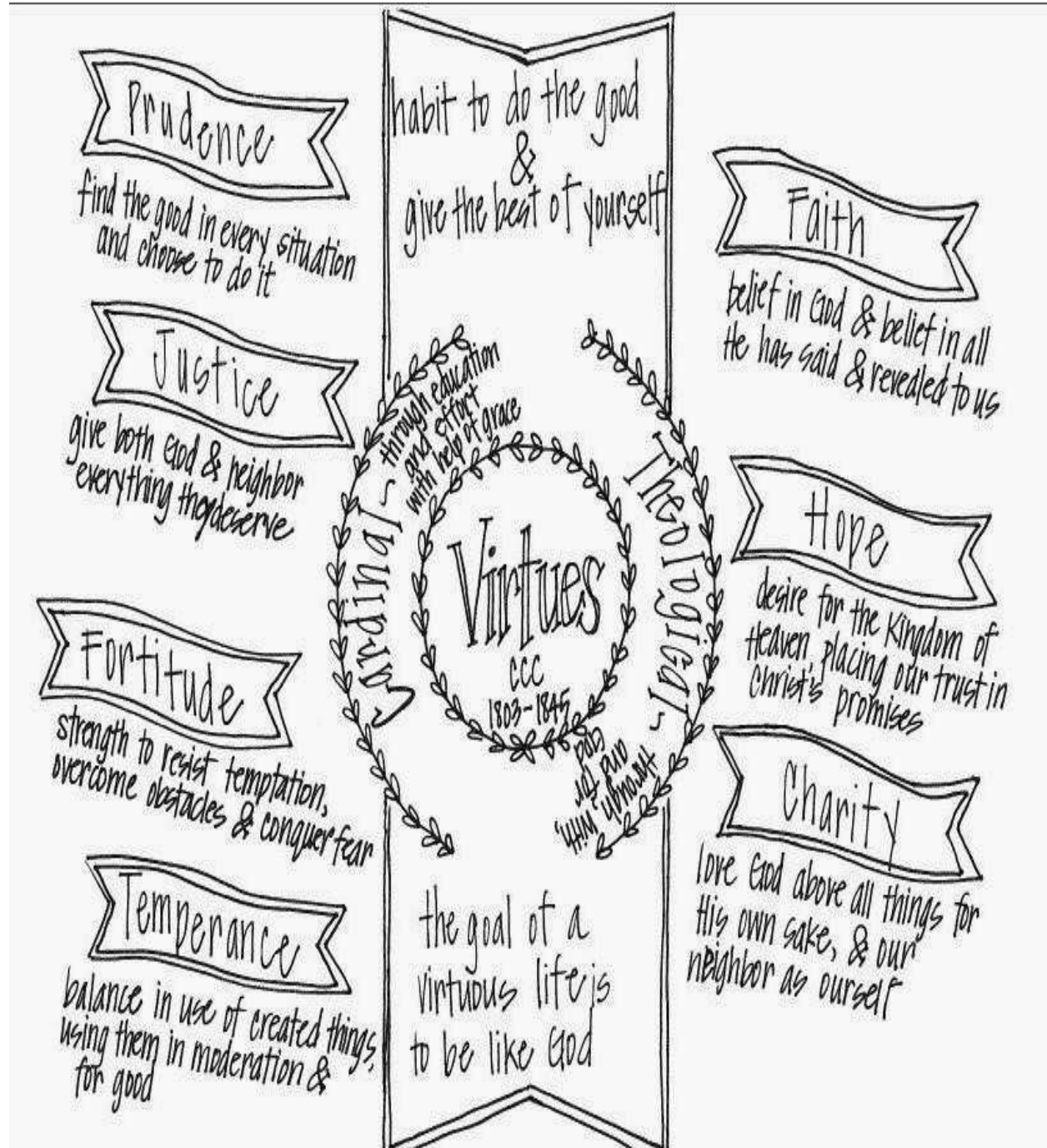
There are four **Cardinal Virtues**: Prudence (*Wisdom*), Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. The Cardinal Virtues are acquired through education and good works. The word “Cardinal” means “that on which other things depend.” These virtues help us to act the right way and develop character.

**Prudence (wisdom)** is the virtue that helps us discern good from evil and abide by our conscience. This virtue helps us know and choose the good in varying circumstances of life. Prudence directs all the other virtues since it is the ability to recognize what is right. After all, someone who wants to lead a good life must know what the “good” is and recognize its true worth. Only a prudent person can apply the virtues of justice, fortitude, and temperance so as to do good. Saint Ignatius Loyola said, “Prudence has two eyes, one that foresees what one has to do, the other that examines afterward what one has done.”

**Justice** is the strong will to rightly give what is due to God and neighbor. This virtue allows us to give God and our neighbor what is rightly owed to them. The guiding principle of justice is: “to each his due.” Justice is concerned with equity and longs to see people get that to which they are entitled. We must allow justice to govern our relations with God and give Him what is His: our love and worship. “Justice without mercy is unloving; mercy without justice is degrading.”

**Fortitude** is the strength and courage to face difficulties and do what is right. This virtue strengthens our resolve to choose good over evil. Someone who practices fortitude perseveres in his commitment to the good, once he has recognized it, even if in the extreme case he must sacrifice even his own life for it.

**Temperance** is the virtue of moderation in pleasures, providing balance in the use of material goods. This virtue helps us dominate our instincts and desire for pleasures. The individual that lacks temperance abandons himself to the rule of his impulses, offends others by his inordinate desires, and harms himself.





## Conscience

One of the best tools that God has given us to complete our mission and to be good disciples is the gift of conscience. The conscience is the inner voice in a person that moves one to do good under any circumstances and to avoid evil by all means. In the conscience, God speaks to man. Conscience is the inner voice in which God manifests (*makes Himself known*) in a man. God is the one who becomes apparent in the conscience. Each of us must form our conscience. The conscience, which is innate to every person endowed with reason, can be misled and deadened. That is why it must be formed into an increasingly fine-tuned instrument for acting rightly. The first school of conscience is self-criticism. We have the tendency to judge things to our own advantage. The second school of conscience is orientation to the good actions of others. The correct formation of conscience leads a person into the freedom to do what has been correctly identified as good. With the help of the Holy Spirit and Scripture, the Church over her long history has accumulated a vast knowledge about right action; it is part of her mission to instruct people and also to give them directions. Thus, the wisdom of the Church helps to form our conscience. A good conscience allows us to use our freewill wisely by choosing to do right.

## The Cost of Discipleship



Jesus gives us a summation of what the cost of discipleship is in Luke 9:23. The price that we must pay to be true disciples of our Lord is sacrifice. We must put aside our wants and desires to do what God wants us to do. This self-sacrifice will bring us the maximum amount of joy in this world. It is challenging to put our wants aside and do the will of the Father; however, we must remember that God knows what is best for us. We simply need to trust Him. Jesus outlines discipleship in three steps: (1) deny ourselves, (2) take up our cross, and (3) follow him. The cost of discipleship allows us to enter more fully into the Paschal Mystery (*the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ*). For when we embrace the cross (*suffering and sacrifice*), we embrace Christ (*the source of Eternal Love*). Are you willing to pay the cost of discipleship?

