Homily, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

After the Christmas festivities, the Ordinary Time begins, as we see in the readings, with three immediate invitations for each one of us. First, we are invited to be servants. The first reading says, "You are my servant." Later it says, "I will make you the light of the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Second, we are to recognize our apostleship as Paul recognized his in the second reading. Third, we are invited to witness Christ as John the Baptist did in the Gospel reading. John the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." The three invitations mean that we are called to serve God and our neighbor; we are called to be the apostles who are continue the work Jesus; and we are called to witness Jesus to the world. This is to say that we are called to disciples of Jesus.

How can we become true disciples of Jesus?

1. A true disciple requires humility. Humility enables a disciple to serve everyone: young and old, rich and poor, small and great, friends and strangers without favorites. A true disciple does not allow his or her status to get in the way of his or her service. Jesus says in Matthew 18:4, "Whoever humbles himself like [a] child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
2. A true disciple is selfless. The focus of a true disciple is not personal gain but concern for others. St Paul writes in Philippians 2:3-4, "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourself. Each looking out not for his own interest, but [also] everyone for those of other."
3. A true disciple is generous and ready to sacrifice. A true disciple is generous with his time, talent and resources. He or she does not grumble and complain about who is present or who is absent, or who contributes or who does not. Of such a disciple Jesus says, "So when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'we are unworthy servants; we have done only our duty'" (Luke 17:10).
4. A true disciple is not an eye-servant. Jesus says, "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them, otherwise, you will have no recompense from heavenly father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, … so your alms may be in secret. And your father in heaven who sees in secret will repay you" (Matthew 6:2-4).
5. A true disciple listens and obeys the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He or she allows his or her actions to be guided by God's words. A good disciple does not insist on his or her will but the will of God (cf. Luke 22:42). The Psalm of today (40:7), "To do your will is my delight."
6. A true disciple is hardworking, relentless and consistent. A true disciple's commitment is not 'hot' today and 'cold' tomorrow, or 'yes' today and 'no' tomorrow. Jesus says, "Let your 'yes' be your 'yes' and your 'no' be your 'no'" (Matthew 5:37). "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters" (Colossians 3:23).
7. A true disciple is honest, upright and undivided. "Whoever works with integrity will be delivered, but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall" (Proverbs 28:18).
8. A true disciple's cheerful disposition brings about greater result of his or her service. 1 Thessalonians 5:16, "Be cheerful no matter what." 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, "God loves a cheerful giver."
9. A true disciple does all things with love and with compassion. 1 Corinthians 16:14, "Let all that you do be done in love." Jesus says, "Be compassionate as your heavenly father is compassionate" (Luke 6:36). A true disciple has love and compassion in his or her eyes as he or she serves.
10. A true disciple lives a life of prayer. Every true disciple draws spiritual nourishment from constant prayer. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving…" (Philippians 4:4-7).

We pray with the words of John the Baptist: Jesus, you are the Lamb of God, you take away our sins with your precious blood, we pray you, take away also our sicknesses and afflictions, as we place all our trust in you alone. Amen.

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