

Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey



Discipleship Habit #5: Serve the Least Regularly

Week 23

Those Who are Last, are Truly First

This month we will explore Discipleship Habit #5: Serve the Least Regularly, along with our next Beatitude – Blessed are the Peacemakers. While focused on service, we will maintain a common Opening Prayer with a reflection tailored toward those who have served. Through these examples, may you see many ways in which you might find yourself in the midst of God’s love through your service.

This weekly material is offered to support our Discipleship Journey as we walk in the foot prints of Jesus.

We encourage you to use this material as a part of your daily prayer practice as follows:

- ❖ Begin with the Opening Prayer.
- ❖ Study Discipleship Habit #5: Serve the Least Regularly.
- ❖ Reflect on Scripture (*John 15:12-17*).
- ❖ Read the Reflections from Dorothy Day.
- ❖ Close with the Closing Prayer.

Let us pray for each other that we are transformed, as individuals and as community, by this Discipleship Journey.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we praise You. You are all-powerful, yet still humble and compassionate. Just as You did for Your disciples at the Last Supper, You bend low in humble service to wash our feet, and invite us to follow Your example of sacrificial love. Forgive us for the times we've failed to see that the poor are created in Your image. In Your Scripture You tell us, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of Mine, you did for Me." (Matthew 25:40) Thank You for coming to us in the distressing disguise of the poor and showing us such a concrete way to give You our love. Help us to know that You long to love the poor through us. Help us to love You by loving the lonely, the suffering, and the outcast. Give us the desire to serve You in the least of our sisters and brothers. Jesus, we trust in You. We make this prayer in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN

Reflection:

This session we encounter the habit of serving the least of our brothers and sisters. As disciples, we do as Jesus does. Jesus spent most of His earthly life with those who were unwanted, who were cast-off, who were broken, sick, injured, who were the scourge of society. In the eyes of Jesus, those who are last are truly first. Those who are the outcast are the dearest and most precious.

This can be very challenging to us. We can be easily lulled into believing that everything we have is a result of our own efforts. We can begin to draw comfort in our prayer and our relationship to Jesus. But our action is central to faith. Everything we have is a gift to be used in the service of others. Even our very relationship with God, through Jesus, calls us out of our comfort zone into seeking out the least of our world, finding the lost, and serving those in need.

Create a list of gifts that you've received from God. How many of these gifts could be shared with others? Identify one of them and give it to someone in need this week.

Reflect on Scripture: John 15:12-17

Jesus said:

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from My Father.

You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask Him in My name.

I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

In what ways has Jesus shown His love for you?

Who does Jesus treat as friends? How might Jesus’ friends be different than those we would consider friends?

What does it mean to lay one’s life down for one’s friends?

Recall a time when you served those in need. What was that experience like for you? How did that experience impact you?

How do you think Jesus is calling you to love the least of His brothers and sisters?

How are you going to respond?

Reflections from Dorothy Day

Dorothy Day, coming into her faith after years of atheism, found God in the streets among the destitute and homeless and then invited them into her own "houses of hospitality" for food, shelter, and care. She co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement and opened houses of hospitality for the poor across the country. Below is an excerpt from "8 Spiritual Heroes: Their Search for God" by Brennan R. Hill.

Day, as a Catholic Christian, saw her God incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ for her was God made human and, therefore, was the way for living human life....Christ was a real presence to her...Jesus was the worker, the poor man without a place to lay his head, and Day was able to see the Lord in the homeless person, the worker trying to get a just wage or without a job. Jesus' commitment to the outcast was the model for Day's dedication to alcoholics, prostitutes, drug addicts, and convicts. This was the way to making life better for people here on earth. "We are not expecting utopia here on this earth. But God meant things to be much easier than we have made them..." Christian love was not romantic or sentimental for Day. It meant laying down her life for her neighbor; it meant sacrificing "our bread, our daily living, our rent, our clothes." She was convinced that the only way we can know that we love God is to show love for other people. She believed that love makes us want to give...

What strikes you from this passage?

What do you find most challenging about this passage? Why?

How would it change your life if, like Dorothy Day, you saw Christ in all those you encounter?

Closing Prayer

Merciful Creator of us all,
in Christ Jesus, Your Son, our Risen Savior,
You have brought light to the blind, comfort to the afflicted,
and Good News to the Poor.

We now remember with heartfelt thanksgiving
the generosity of spirit manifest in the life and labors
of your devoted servant, Dorothy Day.

In times of unrelieved hardship and economic depression,
as well as in widespread prosperity and abundance,
she spent herself in dedicated partnership with the privations and disdain
felt by the homeless and the unwanted as a champion of their rights.

An early, often lonely, witness in the cause of peace and conscience,
at once fearless and gentle, she braved the disapproval of the powerful,
rejection by the many who did not understand, and even imprisonment.

Grant that we, in turn, may be moved by Your Holy Spirit, Father,
to share her compassion and concern as true disciples of the Lord Jesus,
giving ourselves as she did to the love and care
of the neediest members of Christ's Body
and committing our lives, our means, even our homes,
to bring the light and hope, the justice and peace of the gospel
to all your people.

This we pray in the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Claretian Fathers and Brothers, Chicago, IL