

# Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

*A Discipleship Journey*



## **Discipleship Habit #5: Serve the Least Regularly**

Week 25

### **Humble, Self-Emptying 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 the Reflection from St. Vincent de Paul.
- ❖ Close with the Closing Prayer.

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

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#### 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:

Jesus doesn't serve as if looking down on us. Jesus shows us God's design for relationships where the last are put first and the least are treated as the greatest. He illustrated this humble, self-emptying service by washing His disciples' feet – a dirty and undignified job in a sandaled walking culture (John 13:1 – 17). We serve the least, not because we're better, but because they are our sisters and brothers. We come to them, not from on high as people who have more or know better than they, but as humble self-emptying servants.

Jesus teaches us that whatever we do for the least of His sisters and brothers, we do personally for Him. We seek to love and serve the least of our sisters and brothers to love and serve Christ. The habit of "*Service to the Least*" is how we follow Jesus past the comfort and familiarity of our individual lives into a deep and daring love for our suffering sisters and brothers.

Jesus invites us into compassionate service because that is how His Body, the Church, fulfills her identity and mission. We live as disciples of Jesus in the Church when we make others our first priority. Together we are sent to go out on mission to those who most need to hear and experience the Good News of Jesus.

Reflect on a recent experience when you served someone in need; describe what that felt like in your heart.

Does it make you desire to continue with this service, or is it time to serve in another way? What might that look like?

## Reflection from St. Vincent de Paul

Central to an understanding of Vincentian spirituality is the mystery of the incarnation. In God's unfathomable love for humankind, the Son of God became flesh; God and humanity meet in a wondrous exchange.

St. Vincent de Paul teaches: "Since Christ willed to be born poor...He made Himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty. He went so far as to say that He would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against Himself." St. Vincent bases His incarnational spirituality on the 25<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. St. Vincent says that "in serving the poor, we serve Jesus Christ." We "serve Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. And that is as true as our being here." "They (the poor) have been given to us as our masters and patrons." (Conf #24 and Conf #195)

The mystery of the incarnation, so loved by St. Vincent de Paul..., therefore, was not just a matter of doctrine to be believed, but to be put into practice by acts of charity toward the poor and needy. Vincentians who minister to persons who are poor or in need find the person of Jesus in them. And their interaction with Jesus transforms them. Vincentians grow spiritually through their person-to-person service. Vincentians do what they do for the person of Jesus and to the person who is Jesus. This is incarnational spirituality. This is Vincentian spirituality. This is one essential element that differentiates members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul from others.

It is who Vincentians are which gives life to what they do.

(Excerpted from *What It Is...What It Does*, Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council of the United States) (For more information on the St. John XXIII Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, contact Joe DeLucia at 262-685-6034.)

What strikes you from this passage?

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

In what way has your spirituality changed through your service to the poor?

How are you being invited to respond?

Closing Prayer

Open my eyes that I may see  
the deepest needs of men, women, and children.

Move my hands that they may feed the hungry;  
touch my heart that it may bring hope to the despairing;

Teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers;  
let me share my possessions with those in need;

Give me the care that strengthens the sick;  
help me share in the quest to set prisoners free;

In sharing our anxieties and our love,  
our poverty and our prosperity,  
we partake of Your divine presence.

Amen.

*Prayer for Vincentians, St. Vincent de Paul Society*