

Jesus' Call to Discipleship

Throughout the Gospels Jesus constantly invites people to follow him (like the rich young man in today's Gospel). What are some basic characteristics of being a disciple of Jesus? Ten items are identified here—all for our prayer and contemplation.

A disciple is **called by Jesus**; this is seen in all Gospels (e.g. Mk 1:16-20, Lk 5:1-11). The call comes from God's initiative; we don't choose (Jn 15:16 – I chose you). A faith response is expected of the follower. This discipleship is a **personal invitation**. Jesus' followers are called by name; we are not anonymous; names are given (e.g. Jn 1:35-51; Mk 3:13-19; Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:1-11). We enter a **continuous relationship** as "constant companions" of Jesus. Deep friendship develops (Jn 15:14-15; 15:4-8; 15:13).

The disciple becomes a **listener / learner**. The word disciple derives from *discens* (listening). Disciples imbibe the teachings of Jesus; they imitate his outreach to all. They practice Jesus' "barrier-breaking" ministry and participate in "table-fellowship." One notes the **ordinariness of the disciples** (Matthew the tax collector; Peter the fisherman; Luke the doctor). "Ordinary" also means NOT being perfect (lack faith, blind, argue, seek honors, jealous, weak, sinful) as illustrated in Mt 20:20-28 (Zebedee's Sons).

The disciples need to **form community** though they are very different personalities. They see **Jesus as Master** and seek to follow his example (e.g. foot-washing: Jn 13:1-16). They **become apostles** (*apostolein*), "sent" to preach, heal, comfort, and pray as Jesus did.

Following Jesus means **sharing the cross** (Mt. 10:38-39; 16:24-26; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23-26 [adds "daily"]; Lk 14:27). The cross *always* shocks, scandalizes, challenges us; mission is often accomplished in vulnerability (2Cor 12:7-10). Disciples are "**rehabilitated sinners.**" The disciples are not perfect; they fail their master. Yet, after the resurrection, Jesus speaks of peace and reconciliation. Great saints accept their personal sinfulness, yet are profoundly aware of God's love and grace.