

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We have reflected on the subject of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Discipleship is “the” pressing issue of our time in the Church and for the world. Now, more than ever, our world, lost in the chaos of war, poverty, mistrust and self-absorption, is in need of disciple-making servant leaders.

When I use the word “leader,” I am not speaking of politicians or military folk, heads of religious denominations or other faith traditions, or chairpersons of corporate boards. The true leaders of this world are disciple-making servant leaders. These are men and women (some boys and girls), who are willing to model the example of Christ; to encourage others to become disciples; and when called upon, are willing to die for the sake of the Gospel and its ministry of servant hood to all persons! These leaders are driven by a passion to follow Christ’s mission, vision, and values. Our Lord spent much of his ministry and life clarifying his mission, vision, and values. These were the foundation blocks (“Living Stones”) of his ministry to the children of Israel and all who would follow him. In Luke 4:18, our Master boldly declares his mission at the synagogue in Nazareth:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight of the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

He clearly articulated his vision and how he would carry that mission. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew and at the beginning of The Book of Acts, we read these words:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28)*

*“But you shall receive power from when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1)*

Jesus also shared his values that would guide his decisions and measure his successes. Those core values were non-negotiable in our Master’s life. They remained constant over the course of his entire ministry. We find these values in the Beatitudes:

*“Blessed are... the poor in spirit... those who mourn ... the meek ... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ... the merciful ... the pure in heart ... the peacemakers ... those who are persecuted ...” (Matthew 5:1-11)*

Jesus shares his mission, vision, and values in all aspects of his ministry. These “statements” guided his every decision. As someone once wrote: “They were his compass in the good and bad times. He was a clearly defined spiritual leader on a mission. Church leaders today should be the same.”

Let me close by suggesting a couple of questions for each of us to reflect upon in the days ahead. These questions will be used as discussion starters for further conversation and discernment as our community journeys on the path to disciple-making leaders.

1. As a disciple of Jesus, does your ministry reflect the Master’s mission, vision, and values? how? Be specific. If not, what changes need to be made in order to replicate Jesus’ example?
2. What ministries in our community actually model our Lord’s mission, vision, and values? Think of very specific examples.
3. What ministries in our community may need to be remodeled in order to more effectively follow Jesus’ mission, vision, and values? Again, be very specific in your answers.

Being a disciple-making servant leader is risky business in today's environment. And yet, it is the most rewarding aspect of ministry when we are using our God-given talents to serve others in Jesus' Name, and bringing about the Kingdom of God. Pray that God will make every member, visitor, and guest of this community a disciple-making servant leader passionately following our Lord's mission, vision, and values.

Faithfully, Fr. Ron †