

Missionary Commentary

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 12, 2025

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 6:1-8
Psalm 138:1-8
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Mission as Discipleship

Today's Gospel narrates one of several New Testament accounts of Jesus' call of his disciples. This provides us an opportunity to identify *ten aspects* of "discipleship" that provide insight into becoming an authentic Christian, a "missionary-disciple." The disciple is ► **called by Jesus**; this is seen in all the Gospels (e.g. Mk 1:16-20; **Lk 5:1-11: today's gospel**). The call is a reversal of the rabbinical custom in Jesus' time (where the disciple chose his teacher). It comes from God's initiative; we do not do the choosing (Jn 15:16: "I chose you"). Indeed, this is ► **a personal invitation**. Jesus' followers are called by name; we are not anonymous; specific names are given in the New Testament (e.g. Jn 1:35-51; Mk 3:13-19; Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:1-11). Like Jesus' first disciples, our unique person is to be put at the service of the Gospel.

Discipleship implies ► **a continuous relationship**, becoming "constant companions" of Jesus. A deep friendship develops (Jn 15:14-15; 15:4-8; 15:13). The disciple shares the daily life of Jesus as he reaches out to the little, least, lost, lonely, and last. Discipleship requires ► **being a listener and learner**. Disciple comes from the word *discens*, to listen and learn. Thus, a disciple imbibes the teachings and approach of Jesus, constantly reaching out and crossing boundaries, in what can be termed a "barrier-breaking" ministry. Jesus often manifested his solidarity through "table-fellowship," sharing friendship through meals taken together.

The Gospels reveal ► **the ordinariness of the disciples**. Jesus chooses ordinary persons in various roles (Matthew the tax collector; Peter the fisherman; Luke the doctor). "Ordinary" also means *not* being perfect (lacking faith, being blind, seeking honors, being weak and sinful); this is illustrated well in Mt 20:20-28. And yet, these diverse disciples are ► **called to form community**. They are to be together, cooperate, live together; very different personalities are to be integrated into one community: e.g. Simon the Jewish Zealot along with Matthew, the tax-collector and Roman collaborator.

Discipleship demands ► **respecting Jesus as master**, following his example. The basic norm or criterion of all authentic love is Jesus' command to love "*AS I*," as Jesus loved. Jesus gives us a new commandment (Jn 13:34; 15:12). His love is seen in action in the foot-washing (Jn 13:1-16). Disciples will ► **share Jesus' mission**. Disciples become apostles (*apostolein*); they are "sent" to preach, heal, comfort, and pray as Jesus did. Note the "disciple-apostle" dynamic; reflection and action are integrated. This is possible through Jesus' gift of the Spirit (Jn 20:21-22).

continued from previous page

Undoubtedly, discipleship implies ► **sharing the Cross of Jesus**. One follows Jesus in all circumstances (e.g. Mt 10:38-39; 16:24-26; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23-26 [adds “daily”]; Lk 14:27). “Follow me” implies the cross. The cross *always* shocks, scandalizes, and challenges us. Mission is often accomplished in vulnerability (2 Cor 12:7-10). A disciple is deeply aware that one is ► **a rehabilitated sinner**. Jesus’ disciples are not perfect; they fail their master. Yet, after the resurrection, Jesus speaks of peace and reconciliation, and this profound experience is committed to the Church’s memory. Many great saints spoke of their personal sinfulness as well as their profound awareness of God’s love and mercy. Truly, one can validly conclude that these ten characteristics reveal our own identity as Jesus’ missionary disciples (cf. Pope Francis: EG 119-121).

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Isaiah 6:1-8 — Today’s reading narrates the powerful story of God calling the talented prophet Isaiah in the Jerusalem temple (742 BC). Isaiah is overwhelmed by the experience; he is cleansed in speech and sent as a prophet. His genuine response is: “Here I am; send me.”

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 138:1-8 — This psalm appears to echo Isaiah’s temple experience; he praises God in words that come straight from the heart. Indeed, God’s kindness endures forever!

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 — Here we see Paul instructing his Corinthian converts about the centrality of resurrection faith (which some were apparently denying). The bodily resurrection of Jesus is at the very heart of the apostolic preaching and also at the heart of our Christian faith.

Gospel

Luke 5:1-11 — Saint Luke, our evangelist of the current “Year C,” narrates the story of Jesus’ call of his early disciples. Although the disciples have been laboring in vain all night, Simon responds to Jesus’ command to lower the nets. Peter is overwhelmed by the catch of fish; he admits his unworthiness. The disciples leave everything, their very livelihood, and become Jesus’ followers. Truly, a dramatic story of discipleship!

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who has recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024).

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