

The First Disciple

4th Sunday of Advent (Year B)

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Fr. Tony Davis

According to the Gospel accounts, the first disciple of Jesus was Andrew, who later went on to become one of the twelve Apostles. He was with his brother Simon Peter fishing when they were both called by Jesus to follow him, although tradition believes that Andrew actually responded first. This all happened at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry around age 30.

One of the less common titles of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is 'the First Disciple.' While this contradicts what was just said of Andrew being the first disciple, it does broaden our understanding of discipleship. It does correctly show us that being a follower of Jesus is not limited to the men we typically think of or to the time of Jesus' public ministry alone.

In our Gospel passage today, we go back decades before Jesus' public ministry even began to the story of the angel Gabriel coming to Mary to let her know that she will have a child and should name him Jesus. Even though she is somewhat confused, she replied, 'yes,' "behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Mary's yes, or fiat, was the moment she became a disciple, thus making her technically the first disciple. Discipleship is about saying yes.

Unfortunately, many people in our world associate being a Christian with someone who says no. They see us as a group that is

preoccupied with always saying no to the sins and immorality of our world. It is true, we do say no to many things. It is also true that sometimes we get too caught up in the secondary controversial issues of what we are against. But we can say no to some things because we first made a foundational yes to everything. We first said yes to being a disciple. We first said yes to life, to salvation, and to God. Some of our 'nos' are negotiable. Our yes, however, is unconditional and unqualified. We need to keep coming back to that yes throughout the course of our lives, especially if we have forgotten that commitment or strayed away from it. That is how we realign ourselves with proper discipleship.

Mary is the true first disciple because she said yes to God's will for her to bring Jesus into the world.

Is my 'yes' to discipleship broader than all of my 'nos' that come along with my practice of the faith?

As we near the end of the Advent season of waiting, the birth of our Lord is near. Let us consider that even before his birth, Jesus already had his first supporter and first disciple, his mother Mary. Like her, let us make sure that our yes to discipleship is as uncompromising as hers: "behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."