

A FOLLOWER OF JESUS IN HIS HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Discussion/Reflection Questions

INTRODUCTION:

1. The goal of the Christian life is “to know, love and serve Jesus, in order to be happy with him in this life and in the afterlife.” How well would you say you are living this goal? In what ways do you think you need to grow in your knowledge, love, and service of Jesus?
2. How have you “owned” your Baptism, making it “a guiding force in how you live”? What could you do to better “own” your Baptism and embrace your identity as a Christian disciple—a follower of Jesus?
3. “You can’t be a Christian just by yourself.” What role has “the family of God, the community of believers, the body of Christ, the Church” played in your life? How have other Christian disciples helped you to follow Jesus?
4. In what ways could you become more engaged in the Catholic Church to help you grow as a disciple?
5. “Friendship with Jesus begins and deepens by knowing him.” How would you describe your friendship with Jesus? What are some ways you have come to know him, and what are some actions you could take to deepen your friendship with him?
6. The Bible “has the power to change lives.” Reflect on your experience of reading, hearing, and praying the Scriptures and how your life has been changed as a result. How have you encountered Jesus through the Sacred Scriptures?
7. What practices of engaging with the Scriptures do you need to work on developing? For example, listening more attentively to the readings at Mass, more regular reading of the Bible, practicing *Lectio Divina*, etc.
8. What role have Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church (i.e. “the teaching authority of the Pope and the bishops in union with him, under the guidance of the Spirit”) played in your life as a Christian disciple?

WHO IS THE LORD JESUS?:

1. Reflect on the mystery of the Holy Trinity—"three Divine Persons in one Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." What has your relationship with each of the three Divine Persons been like? Which Person would you like to get to know better?
2. "By becoming man, Jesus put flesh on the mystery of the unseen God, and enabled people to see, hear, feel, and touch the glory of Divinity." Sit with that statement and ponder the mystery of the incarnation—that Jesus, the Son of God, became human for our salvation. Then, read John 1:1-18 and prayerfully reflect on that description of the Word (Jesus) becoming flesh (human). What strikes you?
3. If someone were to ask you to describe what you believe about the Blessed Virgin Mary as a Catholic Christian, what would you say? Reread the section entitled "The Blessed Virgin Mary" and try to summarize those teachings in your own words.
4. What role has Mary, the mother of Jesus, played in your life? How have you embraced her as your spiritual mother, and turned to her for inspiration and intercession? What steps could you take to get to know her better?

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?:

1. Open up your Bible (or look up the text online), and find the recounting of one of the many miracles of Jesus in any of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). Read and prayerfully reflect on that passage (e.g. you could read about Jesus' first miracle of changing water into wine in John 2:1-12). What strikes you?
2. In what ways is living in the kingdom of God "kind of like standing on your head; it's upside-down in relation to the world"? How have you experienced this to be the case in your own life?
3. "The love of God is unconditional and unbounded. We can't earn it, or lose it." How does this statement make you feel?
4. What are some practical ways we can follow the first and greatest Commandment: "to love God with all we've got"? How are you doing with following that Commandment? What could you do to better express love for God?
5. What are some practical ways we can follow the second greatest Commandment: "to love our neighbor as we are loved by God"? How are you doing with following that Commandment? What could you do to better love your neighbor (i.e. anyone in need)?
6. "Heaven is felt as the sublime bliss derived from the quieting of our desires, because they are all satisfied by our perfect union with God." Does this statement change your perspective on Heaven at all? How does understanding Heaven in this way affect the way you look at and live life here and now?
7. Based on the section on "Hell," how would you describe it? What must one do to avoid going to Hell?
8. If someone were to ask you to describe what you believe about Purgatory as a Catholic Christian, what would you say? Reread the section entitled "Purgatory" and try to summarize those teachings in your own words. Then, offer a prayer for the souls in Purgatory (you can use the traditional "Eternal rest grant unto them..." prayer or your own words).

WHAT DID JESUS DO?:

1. How would you summarize a response to the question, “Why do we need a savior?”
2. Why did Jesus die on the cross? In other words, what was accomplished through his death?
3. What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make? In other words, why is the resurrection so important to our lives as followers of Jesus?
4. What was the reason Jesus ascended into heaven, rather than staying here on earth?
5. What happened on the day of Pentecost, and why does it matter for us as followers of Jesus today?
6. “All Christians are responsible for continuing the mission of Jesus in the ministries of the Church. But to do this, we need to have the gift of the Spirit, and cooperate with the Spirit’s power.” How has the Holy Spirit worked in your life to help you continue the mission of Jesus in the ministries of the Church? In what ways could you better allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through you in ministry in the Church?
7. Review the list under “Here is an effective way to invite the Holy Spirit to be active in us” in the section on “Jesus sent the Holy Spirit.” How are you doing on putting these steps into practice? Which steps do you most need to work on? Ask the Holy Spirit to help: “Come, Holy Spirit...”
8. If Jesus were to come again tomorrow, would you be ready? How are you looking forward to and preparing for Jesus’ Second Coming, whenever that may be?

WHAT IS THE WAY OF LIFE JESUS SHOWS HIS FOLLOWERS?:

1. How would you respond to the question St. Pope John Paul II repeatedly asked on his first visit to France: "What have you done with your Baptism?"
2. "Some kind of prayer should be part of daily life for a follower of Jesus, in order to keep our friendship with him alive." What is your prayer life like? How could you improve your prayer life? Develop a specific plan to devote time daily to "dialogue with God."
3. If someone asked you to describe what a sacrament is, what would you say? What impact have the sacraments had on your life as a follower of Jesus?
4. "Mass is called the summit of our Christian lives ... Mass is also called the source of our Christian lives." How important is worshipping at Sunday Mass to you? Have you experienced Mass to be the "summit" and "source" of your Christian life? If not, why? If so, how?
5. "Jesus took up his cross to do for others what they couldn't do for themselves, to give life and gladness to others. Taking up our cross involves at least in part doing the same: serving, sacrificing to do for others what they can't do for themselves, to give them life and gladness." How have you taken up your cross and given life and gladness to others?
6. "Going to Confession is powerful to help us grow up, and to become holy, to be more like Jesus. Therefore, it's a good idea to go to Confession regularly, say, once a month." What has been your experience of going to Confession? What difference has it made in your life?
7. "From all eternity, God has a plan for each person's state in life. Our responsibility is to learn God's plan, and then say 'Yes' to it, and live it to the best of our ability." If you have not yet discovered the state in life to which God is calling you ("as a single or a married person, or as a sister or a priest"), what action steps could you take to discern your vocation? If you are already living in a particular state in life, what action steps could you take to "live it to the best of your ability"?
8. "Stewardship is practiced by freely, generously, even sacrificially sharing our time, talent and treasure, not compelled by the threat of punishment, or the promise of a reward." How have you freely, generously, and even sacrificially shared your time, talent and treasure with others? In what ways could you better practice stewardship as a way of life?

CONCLUSION:

1. In the conclusion, Archbishop Jackels outlines how to “use the fingers on our hands to summarize and memorize the beliefs and way of life for followers of Jesus in his Catholic Church.” Read through the two lists again. What strikes you in this summary of beliefs (on one hand) and way of life (on the other hand)? Which of the “way of life” items do you most need to work on practicing? Take some time to work on memorizing these two lists so you can use your fingers to easily remember our beliefs and way of life as followers of Jesus.
2. “Know the Lord. Love the Lord. Serve the Lord out of love. And therein find your happiness and fulfillment in this world and in the next. Then help others who are still seeking to do the same.” Reflect on this concluding challenge. What action step(s) will you take to put what you’ve read in this document into practice in order to more faithfully follow Jesus in His Holy Catholic Church? Make a commitment and stick to it.