

Disciples, Not Merely Christians

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
— John 13:35

Dear Friends,

There is a growing ugliness in our world today — a harshness, a spirit of judgment, and a bitterness that too often finds its way even into the hearts of those who call themselves Christians. It grieves me deeply to see godly people acting in ways that are unkind, divisive, or prideful.

A dear friend once reminded me that we must distinguish between Christians and disciples of Christ. This distinction is not small; it is the difference between mere identity and genuine transformation.

Many who call themselves Christians are not true disciples of Christ. Why is that? Perhaps because of hypocrisy, pride, or a misunderstanding of grace. At times, we cling to unbiblical traditions or seek comfort rather than courage. Sometimes we even spiritualize conflict, losing sight of the humility, gentleness, and love that Christ calls us to embody.

A disciple, beloved, is a learner — a follower and student of Jesus Christ. We enter an intimate and spiritual family where there are no strangers, for in Christ we are one. A disciple commits to: Obeying the Lord’s will, growing in intimacy with God through prayer and Scripture, and showing His love to others in daily life. The life of a disciple bears visible fruit: honesty, empathy, humility, kindness, forgiveness, and steadfast obedience to God’s will. These are not optional virtues, but the living evidence of a heart transformed by grace.

In our time, one of the greatest mistakes in worship is seeking an experience rather than seeking God Himself. Many measure worship by emotion — by the beauty of a song or the thrill of a moment — rather than by the transformation it brings within. But true worship is not measured by feeling; it is measured by surrender. It is a heart that longs for God’s glory above all else, and a life that reflects His love in every word and action.

Genuine worship always leads to changed lives — lives that mirror compassion and humility, and faithfulness of Christ. Christian faith is not primarily an idea or duty, but a relationship — a living friendship with Christ. Through faith, we share in one another’s faith and are strengthened together in love.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus showed His followers a better way to live — a way free from hypocrisy and empty faith. He said, “Follow Me,” not merely to admire Him, but to become like Him. To be His disciple is to make Him the center — the supreme ruler of all we are



and all we do. It is to let His Spirit lead us into the world as agents of transformation — bearers of His voice, His love, and His mercy.

To be God's presence in the world — it is both a blessing and a sacred responsibility. Through courageous faith, we become His hands and heart, touching lives, uplifting spirits, and inspiring others to draw nearer to Him.

Have you ever been carried through a time of crisis by those who love you — as the paralyzed man was carried to Jesus by his friends? So too are we called to carry one another in love, bearing each other's burdens with compassion and faith, until every heart finds healing in His presence.

To be a true disciple of Christ, we must abide in His Word — showing faith and obedience through consistent prayer, study of Scripture, love others as Christ loved the Church — serving, helping, forgiving, and lifting one another up in grace. We must also bear fruit — living lives that glorify God and draw others to Him. For how can we make disciples if we live hypocritically, serve without integrity, or fail to love our neighbor? How can we reflect Christ if we ignore those in need, forsake fellowship, or keep our faith hidden and fruitless?

My friends, let us commit ourselves anew to discipleship. Let us humble ourselves before God, forgive freely, love deeply, and pursue unity with one another. Let us seek His presence above all else, allowing Him to shape our hearts and guide our steps. When we live as true disciples — not merely Christians in name — our lives become radiant beacons of hope, mercy, and grace. The world, weary and wounded, will see in us the living reflection of Christ Himself. As Saint Paul Says, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” — Galatians 2:20 May all who see us come to know Him — the living Christ — through our words and actions.

Blessings!

Fr. Vilaine Philius