

## **Discipleship**

**June 01, 2008**

**Rev. Nathaniel R. Elliot, Jr**

The readings today have a common theme. The will of God is not something to be scorned. The ramifications of disobedience can be severe. Jesus said, *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father in heaven* (Mt. 7:21).

Because we are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, we are children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ and that we are, with him, coheirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. With this relationship there comes an obligation of duty and obedience. Discipleship means to study and to follow the Master. To follow Jesus without a willingness to help carry the obligations of the Master is meaningless. If we say that we are disciples, if we profess to love the Lord and want to be his friends and his obedient servants, it is incumbent upon us to seek his will and obey. Anything less is sin. There is no other way to put it. To sin, by definition, is to know what is right and to do what is wrong. To sin is to get in God's face and say: *Your will does not matter to me. I'm going to do things my way.*

So, how can we know the will of God? Sometimes the answer is obvious. We don't say the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, in our

## **Discipleship**

**June 01, 2008**

**Rev. Nathaniel R. Elliot, Jr**

parishes anymore, but we do say the Summary of the Law so we know the basic rules of righteousness and for the most part we follow them. The problem for us, who wish to be faithful servants, is not a problem of knowing the basic rules. The problem is not one of even obedience to the Golden Rule that tells us to do to other people, as we would have them do to us. The problem is discerning God's will in a confusing and chaotic world, when all the choices look equally bad or when all of them look equally good. So, what can we do? How can we seek and find the will of God when things are not all that clear?

I suggest **Prayer** is the beginning point. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will guide us, that he will open our minds to his wisdom, lead us to knowledge and give us the courage and fortitude to do that which pleases God and builds his Kingdom on earth. We also seek wisdom from the Bible and from those whose Christian judgment and integrity we trust. We remember the injunction that we are to love one another as he loved us, known to us as a part of the Summary of the Law, the greatest ethical tool that we can possibly have. In any given situation, there is one question that we must ask; answering it is not always easy. The question is this: *what is the most loving action* or, *what is the most loving choice?* Or, *what would Jesus do?* When we think we know the

## **Discipleship**

**June 01, 2008**

**Rev. Nathaniel R. Elliot, Jr**

answer, when with absolute self-honesty we can say that in this situation, at this time and place, given these circumstances, we believe that we know what Jesus would do, then we do that. We do what we believe Jesus would do. To do anything else is not to follow Jesus. To do anything else is renounce our baptismal vows. To do anything else is to choose sin.

Discipleship comes with a price. To follow Jesus is always sweet, but it is never easy. To follow Jesus means that we put God first. In other words there is a cost to discipleship that we must pay if we want to be disciples. What is that price? It is the sacrifice of self for the glory of God. Only we find that we gain so much from a loving and joyful God that in the end the sacrifice of self is a great reward to the self. The archetype of Christian obedience is the obedience of Jesus to the Father, an obedience that took him ultimately to the Cross. We mirror this obedience in our own discipleship. The reward is the knowledge that God is pleased with us and we are truly one in Spirit with our Savior.

**AMEN.**