

Becoming Intentional Disciples -

In the last two newsletters we spoke of the first two thresholds of conversion – initial trust and curiosity.

The third threshold is **Openness**. Sherry Weddell writes that curiosity is a God-given part of being human that is naturally ordered to ultimate fulfilment in God. Under the influence of grace, it is intended to lead on to the next threshold: openness. But moving into that threshold is one of the most difficult journeys for 21st c. people to make because it demands that we declare ourselves open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change.

The one on the verge of openness can feel as if he or she is teetering on the edge of an abyss. It involves making the choice to lower such defences as cynicism and antagonism, and to acknowledge to God and to oneself that you are open to change. It can feel dangerous, crazy, frightening and out of control. There are many internal and external pressures, fears and blocks that must be overcome to reach openness. Because of this, many who are curious never make this transition.

Pope Benedict XVI touched upon this dynamic in his inaugural homily: “If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant and unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom?”.

Many go back and forth between wanting change and being opposed to change. Since the journey to openness may well be a slow process, patience is vital. It helps to talk about our own struggles of faith, how we look to God to enable us to change and our experience of his helping us change. It also helps to ask well-timed questions that raise the issue of personal change: “What do you do when life gets hard?” or “Where is God in all this for you?” We can also encourage others to ask God for a sign. We can also ask others if we can pray for them to be open to God. Ask them if they would be willing to pray themselves and acknowledge their openness to God. One very simple and non-threatening way to help foster trust, curiosity and openness is Eucharistic Adoration.

Adoration appeals to post-moderns because it is experiential, mysterious and accessible to everyone. One person calls this “Spiritual Radiation Therapy” because it places a person in the direct presence of Jesus in the trust that He will act if we leave the door open the merest crack. All it requires is the ability to sit down. Eucharistic Adoration gives people an experience of encountering God. As a human heart opens to Jesus, it becomes increasingly difficult to remain neutral. The person growing closer to discipleship must cross the next great frontier, from being open to change as a mere possibility to engaging in an active spiritual quest. He or she must cross into the threshold of spiritual seeking, which we will talk about next week.