

Becoming Intentional Disciples

– Sherry Weddell, a key Catholic writer today, says that a core issue facing the Church in our time is how to foster a culture in which all Catholics consciously see themselves as disciples of Jesus living according to His will and as apostles sent into the world to proclaim Him to others. She speaks of five stages of spiritual growth that typify the experience of conversion. Conversion is not simply for “converts” – i.e. non-Catholics joining the Catholic Church. Not just Scott Hahn, G.K. Chesterton or Saul of Tarsus experienced conversion. “Cradle Catholics” like Ignatius of Loyola, Francis of Assisi, Blaise Pascal and Teresa of Avila also had profound conversion experiences that transformed them.



We, too, are called to a deeper, ongoing conversion. In a sense, conversion never ends, because there will always be hidden areas of our minds and hearts where we have not fully surrendered to the Lord, where we are not loving Him above all else, or where we are not truly loving and forgiving others as Jesus did. In the next few newsletters we will look at what Sherry Weddell calls the thresholds of conversion. These thresholds are focused upon one’s lived relationship with God rather than one’s baptismal status or knowledge of the Faith. The first threshold is **Initial Trust**. Here a person has a positive association with Jesus, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian. Trust is not the same as active personal faith. I can believe in Jesus, but still remain distant. Trust makes me get closer to Him, closer to the Church, closer to my fellow parishioners. The first task of forming intentional disciples is to create bridges of trust between each person and Jesus and between fellow believers. Lives lived in joy, generosity and integrity – not for show, but for the glory of Christ – can and will break down walls of distrust and give off a sweet aroma of beauty that people follow. In this coming week, let’s examine the quality of our trust.

“In Leon Bloy’s novel *The Woman Who Was Poor*, the heroine famously declares, ‘There is only one sadness, it is to not be a saint.’ The tragedy of not being a saint is both global and personal, temporal and eternal. A saint’s life sends out ripples of grace that bless many within the Church and outside of it. When the fruit of a saint’s life is missing, all of us are impoverished, because the impact of the presence or absence of the power of the Holy Spirit doesn’t stop at the borders of an individual’s earthly life” (Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*)