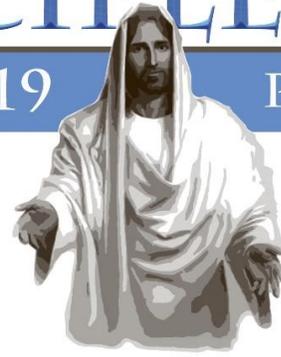


We begin this New Year in our Lord 2019 and our Holy Church focuses on Discipleship. As our Lord said to His disciples “Follow Me” for His public ministry, He continues to call us to follow Him and wants our relationship with Him to grow and strengthen as the days, months and years goes by. Our PNCC is calling us to renew our Discipleship in our Lord this year and as we begin 2019 we have a special message from our Prime Bishop and a reflection on Renewed Discipleship by Rev. Dr. Scott J. Lill. May we take these words to heart and grow closer to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this new year!

# DISCIPLESHIP

2019

PNCC



## Renewed Discipleship in 2019

With the hanging of each new calendar, we are gifted by God with the opportunity for a fresh start. Most of us enthusiastically embrace this chance for a personal reboot in the form of “New Year’s resolutions,” which cover everything from improving our personal health and increasing our physical fitness to strengthening our relationships with other people or even bettering our financial situation. Some of them entail wholesale changes to the way we live, while others call for smaller, simpler modifications to our daily routines. Certain people, exhibiting intense dedication and deep-seated self-discipline, seem to be able to make continual headway toward meeting their goals throughout the entire year, while others with their own laser-focused attention, whole-hearted efforts and more than a few prayers for help and cries for mercy, also make steady and consistent progress...until right around the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. (*Yes...I’m looking at you, 2018 goal to run 6 miles every morning at 5:00 AM.*)

Regardless of how far into the New Year we actually make it before throwing in the towel, it is paramount that we all recognize that true success in each of these sincere endeavors can really only be measured by a single-criteria: *perseverance*. After all, we are all works in progress and (aside from a miraculous intervention akin to the conversion of one Saul of Tarsus) none of us is transformed in an instant. Further, all of these efforts are underpinned by the results of an honest self-assessment and motivated by a single implicit acknowledgement: the need to change. It is when we put these two points together, that we come to see the essence of every realistic New Year’s resolution, regardless of its particular object: *a sincere commitment to just keep working to be better*.

With hopeful hearts and open minds, we Polish National Catholics are about to collectively embark upon a year-long consideration of what it truly means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. This will give each of us the chance to further fortify areas of our lives that are already spiritually and morally well-ordered and also the opportunity to formally recognize and actively address aspects yet in need of improvement. Throughout the year, we will be presented with matters for prayer, topics for reflection, chances for honest introspection and opportunities to act—all aimed toward the single goal of becoming more authentic disciples of the Lord Jesus. Knowing this, it makes sense that we begin these efforts by briefly considering what Christian discipleship really means.

In the most basic sense, a disciple is a student, and we all know from experience that every student, regardless of the course of study, needs a teacher. The ongoing process of exploring one’s relationship with God and growing in the spiritual life is no different. During the time of our Lord Jesus’ earthly life, many wished to more fully understand their own place within the covenants made by the God of Israel with his chosen people Israel. They earnestly desired to delve more deeply into the Law and the Prophets, hoping to gain clearer insight into what God expected from them. To guide them in this, they would choose a particular rabbi, under whose tutelage they would study for a period of time. Sometimes the students would even travel with the more famous rabbis, seeking to learn not just from their instruction but by emulating their example.

This was not simply an academic pursuit for its own sake, however, for they were all seeking something much deeper. They knew that they needed to change, to grow, to improve, and they were looking for someone to teach them—to give them a vision of who they could become and a how to accomplish this. Eventually, though, the disciples would have learned all that the rabbi had to teach them through their instruction and example and they would move on, with some of them becoming rabbis themselves.

St. John the Baptist played a similar role for a little while with many different people coming to him in search of something better. The Forerunner not only confirmed their need for conversion, he explained what they should do and, perhaps most importantly, he led by his own example. But even his time as their teacher came to an end, when along came the One whom the Baptist himself proclaimed as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1: 29). Along came the Teacher of teachers and he changed discipleship in two important ways.

First, the Lord Jesus spoke clearly when proclaiming to his disciples at the Last Supper, that “you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...” (John 15:16). In this moment, we see Jesus THE Teacher, assembling his school—indeed, the Church—pupil by pupil, disciple by disciple, and letting them know there would be expectations for them. What inexpressible joy should fill our hearts when *we* hear these words! What con-

solation and hope should come from knowing that the Lord has called *each of us* by name and has made us his very own in the waters of Baptism! Jesus the Divine Teacher has chosen us to be his disciples, and understanding this even a little should give us a sense of self-worth solidly rooted in the loving esteem with which the Lord holds his people.

Second, Jesus established *eternal* relationships with his disciples. We must never think that our own discipleship was merely a period of training that ended with Confirmation or whenever we last attended a class in our parish's School of Christian Living. Quite to the contrary, Christian discipleship is *permanent* as Jesus always has more to teach us, more of Himself to reveal to us, greater works of service for us to embrace on his behalf, ever-greater efforts of self-improvement that he would have us fervently engage. After all, he sets the bar pretty high for his disciples: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Our Lord radically transformed the nature of the relationship between teacher and student in that *He, Himself, is* the perfect teacher (Jn 13:13), *He, Himself, is* the subject matter (14:6) and *He, Himself, is even* the didactic methodology (Mt 11:28-30). **The ultimate end of discipleship is to grow ever closer to him, in every way, in every aspect of our lives.** He who started the Church by calling the Apostles by name to follow Him, has called all of us to *ongoing discipleship* as the irreplaceable foundation for the entire course of our lives, the standard by which we should make every decision and the surest principle of all our actions. Knowing this, we must always assiduously and consciously journey with Jesus our Teacher, recognizing that we will never arrive at our ultimate destination until we reach *the fullness* of that Kingdom which He inaugurated, about which the Church preaches and labors to build.

Therefore, as the New Year's resolutions fall from our lips, may they take the form of a sincere prayer of recommitment to the Lord and a promise to persistently engage our call to be authentic disciples of Jesus and everything that this entails, never giving up even should we stumble and fall for the Lord will always help us get back on the pathway that He has marked out.

Indeed, each new year brings to us an opportunity for a fresh start...and thanks be to God for that because we usually need it! We, as Polish National Catholics, will have the opportunity to embrace this together in 2019—may we do so with irrepressible joy. So, ring the bell! It's 2019 and...class is in session. But, then again, for us it's always in session.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
**PNCC Supreme Council Future Direction Committee**  
 Most Rev. Anthony A. Mikovsky, *Prime Bishop*  
 Very Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich Jr., *Chairman*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2019</h1> <p>PNCC Eastern Diocese Mission / Evangelism Prayer</p>					Jesus is calling His Church to discipleship: "Come, follow Me!" What does this mean?	Disciple = one who accepts and assists in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.
If we have trusted in Jesus, accepting His gift of eternal life & salvation, we are His disciples.	As followers of Jesus, we have in us the Holy Spirit who helps us to grow in Christ.	1 A disciple is a learner. Read God's Word daily, and ask Him to help you live it.	2 Sing to the Lord and bless His Name, proclaim His saving love day after day! (Ps.96:2)	3 "What is central to all Theology and Spirituality is that the Three Persons of the Trinity...	4 ...want to reveal themselves to you." ~Karl Rahner Teach us, Lord; we want to know You.	5 God has spoken to us through His Son, whom He has made heir of all things. (See Hebrews 1:1-2)
6 EPIPHANY May we seek Jesus, the King of kings, bringing gifts, as the Wise Men did.	7 "In choosing to be born for us, God chose to be known by us." ~St. Peter Chrysologus	8 "Redeemer of all, you came to tear down the walls separating Jew from Gentile...	9 ...root out the prejudices that erode the depths of our humanity." ~Lit. of the Hours	10 Read Luke 4:14-22. What is the Spirit of the Lord calling you to do where you are?	11 (Luke 5:12-16) "If Jesus needed prayer, can I neglect it myself?" ( <i>Sacred Space</i> )	12 Lord, teach us Your ways, and help us to follow in Your footsteps. ( <i>Liturgy of the Hours</i> )
13 Lord, <b>baptize</b> Your Church in the Holy Spirit and in fire! Renew us, make us like Jesus.	14 Ask yourself, "How would Jesus act in the situation I'm in right now?" ( <i>Sacred Space</i> )	15 (Mark 1: 21-28) "Deliver us from evil." Lord, all things are possible in You.	16 (Mark 1) Jesus delivered, cured, and strengthened. Ask Him for what you need today.	17 (Ps. 27:35) "The Lord be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant."	18 <i>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity</i> May all who follow Jesus be one as He is with the Father,	19 "...that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me." (John 17)
20 (1 Cor. 12) There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.	21 (Ephesians 4) "Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives...	22 ...by means of the peace that binds you together." Jesus, help us to live in this way.	23 Let all you say and do be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. ~Colossians 3:17	24 Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God... ~1 Corinthians 10:31	25 "The measure of one's love for God depends upon how deeply aware he is...	26 ...of God's love for him." ~ Diadochus of Photice (5 <sup>th</sup> century)
27 This is the meaning of love: we did not love God, He has loved us. ~1 John 4:10	28 The Lord loved me and gave Himself up to death for me. ~Galatians 2:20	29 You are a people God has made His own... ~ 1 Peter 9-10	30 Surely the man who said: <i>My sin is too great to merit pardon</i> , was wrong. ~St. Bernard	31 When you seek with your whole heart, you will find me, says the Lord. Jeremiah 21:13-14	Pray daily and plan to attend this year's Mission Workshop - <b>Identity: Who We Are in Christ</b>	Holy Trinity PNCC, Plantsville, CT, March 29-31, 2019