

This short act of worship has been produced by Revd Valentin Dedji for you to use at home or wherever you are and if you are unable to worship in a church building. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

### **Welcome & Invocation**

Dear friends, I warmly greet you and welcome you in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. **Amen!**

The theme of our service today is: **'Growing into Discipleship'**

Therefore, let's start by listening or singing to our first hymn that talks about servanthood and humility...

### **Hymn Brother, Sister, let me serve you Singing the Faith 611**

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JahFRDrSCs>

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;

we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace  
to let you be my servant, too.

Richard A.M. Gillard

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**Prayers of Adoration** (adapted from Psalm 34)

I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
My soul makes its boast in the LORD;  
let the humble hear and be glad.  
O magnify the LORD with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.  
O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him.  
May the name of the Lord be blessed for ever. **Amen!**

**Bible Reading: Mark 9: 30-37**

**Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time**

<sup>30</sup> They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, <sup>31</sup> because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

<sup>33</sup> They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he

asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” <sup>34</sup> But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

<sup>35</sup> Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

<sup>36</sup> He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

**Sermon: ‘GROWING INTO DISCIPLESHIP’**

As we continue exploring the Gospel according to St Mark, we may remember that the passage of last week was about how Jesus had an engaging conversation with his disciples about what their views were on His true divine identity. Jesus then ended up by declaring to the crowd that, if they really wanted to follow Him, they should be ready to take up their cross. That was a call in disguise to his followers to be prepared to let go of their own ego. It was a call to a self-sacrifice and to humility. In other words, Jesus invited his followers to embrace a life-style centred more on the interest of others than on themselves. That’s what the late German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called ‘The cost of discipleship’.

We would have thought that such a teaching was clear enough and that, the matter was closed. Instead, in our reading of today in Mark 9: 30-37, we see that the disciples are still on a 'learning journey' regarding the same issue of discipleship. They were still on a step-by-step learning process about understanding Jesus' Mission and Ministry, together with the practical implications on their own daily life.

That's why I would like to reflect with you now on the theme: **'GROWING INTO DISCIPLESHIP'**.

### Setting the Context

Reading from this from our passage of Mark 9:30 - 37, it appears clearly that, the story line unfolds as Jesus and His disciples were travelling through Galilee. That was an excellent opportunity for The Master to continue teaching his disciples about some 'secret' principles of his Ministry.

As a matter of fact, one of the great themes of Mark's Gospel is to initiate Jesus' disciples into his 'Messianic secrets' and reflect Jesus' concern to complete his Mission without interruption. The key point here as the evangelist Mark portrays it is that, an early recognition of Jesus as **The Messiah** would lead to premature adulation and a demand that He become a political messiah, which would hinder his Ministry and could possibly prevent his death. That's why in Mark 8:29, when to his question 'who do you say that I am?' Peter replied, 'You are the Messiah', Jesus 'strongly ordered them 'not to tell

anyone about it'. Even when they were passing through Galilee, 'He did not want anyone to know it.' (Mark 9:30). The other aspect that emerges from this passage is that, the Ministry and Mission of Jesus are presented as the essence of His 'life story'. That 'life story' is the model, the pattern and the mirror which portray Jesus as the **Messenger** as well as the **Message** about the way to Salvation. As a matter of fact, in Mark's Gospel, we are presented with a clear picture of the person and work of Christ, and an encouragement to respond in faith rather than fear when the supernatural element enters into play. The appeal to the disciples is to update their faith, their trust and their obedience in Jesus.

In other words, anyone who is truly passionate about growing into discipleship with Christ should take time to get close to Him, patiently journey with Him, pay attention to his teachings, learn from Him that:

- 1- Discipleship is a Learning Process toward trust and obedience
- 2- Discipleship is a Call to Servanthood
- 3- Discipleship is a Call to Humility

In his teaching on the same topic of discipleship, Jesus said elsewhere: **'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves'** (Matthew 16:24 NIV). At first, in the same way that the disciples 'did not understand' what Jesus was teaching

them (see Mark 9:32), it would happen that we too may miss a number of points about what it means to be Jesus' disciples, especially in our society today. When that happens, this would certainly lead us to think and do things our way, instead of following Jesus' way. That's what happened when the disciples suddenly forgot Jesus' previous teachings on 'taking up their cross and follow him'. Then, they 'started arguing with one another about who was the greatest' among them (v.34). As their human nature fully took over, they were ready to trample down on one another in order to jump the queue to the top. Knowing the consequences of such a competitive and self-glorifying attitude, Jesus took the opportunity to do what He always did best, by teaching them afresh that, if they genuinely wanted to grow in their discipleship, if they really wanted to be number 1 in all their undertakings, they should be ready to learn first how to start serving others and putting their interests first. Above all, they should be ready to show compassion to those among them who may be different from them and may seem as 'less important' as little children. Elsewhere, Jesus clearly declared: "***Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.***" (Mark 10:14).

In conclusion, 'GROWING INTO DISCIPLESHIP' is not about growing into perfectionism. Discipleship is the foundation of everything else in the Christian life. It is about trusting,

obeying, believing, serving, forgiving and loving Jesus' way, not our way. Then, we can confidently sing with the hymn writer John Henry Sammis:

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

For growing into discipleship, requires from us to switch from our life-**enhancing** aspirations and to embrace life-**changing** principles taught and lived by Jesus. This is a BIG DEAL. This is what it means to make His Kingdom come in our personal life, our families, our churches, our local communities and in our nation, especially in times like this. As Jesus Himself put it, 'whoever welcomes [Him] welcomes [God] who sent Him' (v.37).

Whatever stage you may be right now on your personal spiritual journey, I pray that Jesus may teach you how to grow into discipleship with Him, in order to experiment a manifestation of the divine presence in many aspects of your life. **Amen!**

## Prayers of Intercession

O Heavenly Father,

We pray for a world where every child, every vulnerable person finds welcome in a sheltered place, where love is tender, undefiled, and firmness intertwines with grace.

Lord Jesus, we pray for a nation just and fair that seeks the welfare of us all, where leaders guide with prudent care and nurture life for great and small.

Finally, we pray for a world where all have voice, a place where humility and servanthood would reign over a spirit of competition and selfishness. Till then, may all have rightful choice for compassion, solidarity and mutual care. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen!**

## Final Hymn **Jesu, Jesu, Fill us with your Love (H&P) 145**

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAdERIQ\\_mg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAdERIQ_mg)

***Jesu, Jesu,  
Fill us with your love,  
Show us how to serve  
The neighbours we have from you.***

Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
silently washes their feet,  
Master who acts as a slave to them.

***Jesu, Jesu,  
Fill us with your love,  
Show us how to serve  
The neighbours we have from you.***

Neighbours are wealthy and poor,  
Varied in colour and race  
Neighbours are nearby and far away.

***Jesu, Jesu,  
Fill us with your love,  
Show us how to serve  
The neighbours we have from you.***

These are the ones we should serve,  
These are the ones we should love.  
All these are neighbours to us and you.

*Jesu, Jesu,  
Fill us with your love,  
Show us how to serve  
The neighbours we have from you.*

Kneel at the feet of our friends,  
Silently washing their feet,  
This is the way we should live with you.

*Jesu, Jesu,  
Fill us with your love,  
Show us how to serve  
The neighbours we have from you.*

T.S. Colvin (1925 -) ©1969 Agape, Carol Stream, IL, USA

## Blessing

May the Lord bless you and make His face to shine upon you.  
May He grant you His Peace. May He teach us how to serve the  
neighbours we have from Him. All this for His Glory. **Amen!**

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