



# St. Ambrose Parish

St. Augustine Church, 30 Caputo Road, North Branford, CT 06471  
St. Monica Church, 1321 Middletown Avenue, Northford, CT 06472

## T.R.A.I.T.S. of a Disciple

**T**akes a conscious commitment, **R**outinely serve out of love, **A**cept Christ's teachings, **I**ntentionally pray, **T**ell others & build faithful community, **S**trengthened by the Sacraments.

*"Disciples pray with passion. Disciples worship. Disciples love the Church and serve her with energy and joy. Disciples give lavishly. Disciples hunger to learn more about their faith. Disciples fill every formation class in a parish or diocese. Disciples manifest charisms and discern vocations. They clamor to discern God's call because they long to live it. Disciples evangelize because they have really good news to share. Disciples share their faith with their children [and others]. Disciples care about the poor and about issues of justice. Disciples take risk for the Kingdom of God." Sherry Weddell*

"Follow me." These words are heard echoing throughout the Gospels by Christ as He encounter people in His life. This invitation to drop everything and follow Christ wasn't just for those in Scripture, but for all of us today! "Follow me" is an invitation for us all to become followers and disciples of the Lord.

Discipleship is a word that we hear frequently as Catholics but many of us may still wonder, "What exactly is a disciple?" A disciple is someone who follows and spends time with a specific teacher. During this time, the disciple learns from the teacher and begins to module their behaviors the one they are following. The goal of discipleship is so much more than acquiring knowledge from the teacher; it's about acting and living a life like the teacher does. So, when Christ, the greatest of teachers invites us to follow Him and become His disciples, He is actually inviting us to become like Him. What an invitation! But just like any invitation, this one requires a response from the one being called: either yes or no.

If you are willing to follow Christ, you are faced with a simple but sometimes difficult question: "How?" Becoming a disciples isn't something that happens over night or by saying yes only once. Becoming a disciple is a lifelong journey that takes a conscious decision and dedicated discipline. It's so much more than just learning about Jesus; it's about becoming like Jesus. It's not just about education and knowledge; it's about transformation and behaviors. As you grow in your relationship with Christ and become familiar with the way He lived His life, it will become more and more clear how you should live yours. Becoming familiar with the T.R.A.I.T.S. of a disciple is also helpful so you can start taking concrete steps towards a stronger relationship with the Lord. As you take these steps and answer His call to "follow me", He can start transforming you into the disciple He created you to be!

It's so important to remember that discipleship is a lifelong journey and not something you need to complete or accomplished before a certain grade or age. The more this is understood, the easier it will become to view these T.R.A.I.T.S. as a guide to follower rather than a checklist to complete. Discipleship is a way of life, not a list of requirements, so be careful not to view it like that! By becoming familiar with these T.R.A.I.T.S., taking time to reflect on the questions and apply the examples to your life, you can continue taking steps in the direction of discipleship. You can also look to the saints, who are examples of real people who have answered the call to discipleship, or to people in your own life who are living their lives in the way a disciple is called to live. In all of these ways, we can become more and more familiar with how to live out Christ's call to "follow me" in today's world!

*Additional resources and websites for assistance in living out the T.R.A.I.T.S. of a Disciple can be found on the St. Ambrose website – [nbcatholics.org](http://nbcatholics.org).*

## To be a disciple of Christ, it Takes a conscious commitment.

"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:27. If we meet Christ, desire to accept his invitation to follow Him and work towards becoming a disciple, we must realize that it takes a conscious decision. You do not become a disciple passively, you become one by making the decision and acting in ways that support that choice. When this is understood, it becomes clear that this isn't a decision that can be made by your parents or grandparents, your priest or even Christ Himself. Jesus is inviting you to follow Him. He desires to have a relationship with you personally, so you must be the one to decide whether you will accept or reject His invitation. Having a relationship with someone takes commitment. It means you are willing to take the time and put in the effort that is necessary to help this relationship flourish. If you accept this invitation to follow Christ, take time to personally reflect on your life, how you're acting and how you can grow as a disciple - then start taking action!

### Reflection Questions

- How do I spend my time throughout the day? What areas, activities and people receive most of my attention?
- Do these areas lead me closer or further away from my relationship with God? How?
- Is my faith important to me?
- Do I really believe that Christ is who He says He is?
- Do I believe that a relationship with Christ is necessary and important?
- Do my actions and the way I'm living my life support my answers?
- In what ways do I feel like I can be more intentional in my relationship with God?
- Am I willing to put in the time and effort to grow in the T.R.A.I.T.S. of a disciple?
- Is there one that you feel like you are already applying to your life? Is there one that you feel like you are struggling with the most?

### Examples of Action Steps

- Think about and decide whether or not you want to accept Christ's invitation to become like Him and pursue a life as a disciple of Christ.
- Become familiar with the T.R.A.I.T.S. of a disciple so you can better understand what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ.
- Look to the people that are in your life - family, friends, people in your parish or community - that live as authentic disciples of Christ. Reflect on what they do and how they act that makes them a good disciple and work towards modeling your behaviors like them.
- Take the time to read through and think about the reflection questions under each of the T.R.A.I.T.S. Be honest with yourself when answering the questions so you know the areas that you need to grow in. Don't be discouraged if there is room for a lot of growth! Discipleship is a journey and no disciple is ever done growing!
- Look at the examples of action steps under each of the T.R.A.I.T.S. Reflect on the ones that you are already living out and on the ones that you may need to start living out.
- Most importantly, take time to pray for the guidance and strength from the Lord as more intentionally walk down the road of discipleship!

## To be a disciple of Christ, you Routinely serve out of love.

Christ made it very clear that He came not to be served, but to serve others out of love. So if we desire to become a disciple, we must remember that it isn't a call to power but to service. To be like Christ means to serve like Him and to put others' needs above your own. Service is so much more than being a part of service trips and events though. While those things are great, serving like Christ means cultivating a servant's heart within you. It is about constantly putting others before yourself, even when it is uncomfortable, inconvenient or just plain annoying. Christ didn't serve out of obligation and either should you - you should serve out of love and to lead others to Christ. Jesus tells us, "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35. This love needs to be rooted in truth, who is Christ Himself.

### Reflection Questions

- Do I want to serve others like Christ did?
- Do I actively look for ways to put others before myself?
- Do I serve out of love or out of obligation?
- Am I familiar with the Works of Mercy and do I live them out in my every day life?
- Do I spend my time in a way that serves others and can lead them to Christ?
- Do I use my talents I've been blessed with to help others and serve the Lord?
- Can I use the treasures I have to help the less fortunate and support my parish family?
- What are some specific ways that I can use the time, talent and treasure that the Lord has blessed me with to serve others? How can I use them to serve Christ and His Church?
- Who are the specific people in my life that I can do a better job of loving, serving and demonstrating the gospel to?

### Examples of Action Steps

- Become more familiar with the Works of Mercy that Christ calls us to live out in our lives. The Works of Mercy can be categorized as the Corporal Works of Mercy and the Spiritual Works of Mercy. Work on implementing these into your every day life.
- Think about those in your family, community, school, parish, etc. that are most in need and what you can do to serve them.
- Sign up to receive Flocknote notifications for service opportunities in the parish and lend a helping hand. A parish cannot run without dedicated parishioners who step up to help out! Check out what service opportunities we have going by visiting the Youth Ministry page on the St. Ambrose website.
- Become familiar with the different ministries at the parish and get involved in one that you're interested in. If you see a need that isn't being addressed, talk to Rose or someone else in the office to see what can be done about it.
- Reflect on the ways you are using your time. Your life is a beautiful gift from God and something that we frequently take for granted! How are you spending your time? Take time each day away from TV, electronics, sports, studying, friends, etc. and get into the habit of devoting it to your relationship with the Lord. Set time aside to pray, read the Bible, journaling, learning about your faith, etc.
- Reflect on the talents that the Lord has blessed you with and how you can use them to help others in your family, your community and your parish. Talents can range widely: the talent of being a good comforter or listener, of making others laugh and bringing joy, of cooking or baking, of teaching, of being athletic, of connecting with children or the elderly, of being handy or good with electronics, etc. We should not keep these talents for ourselves but learn how to use them to serve others and glorify the Lord.
- Reflect on your treasures and all the financial gifts you have been given by the Lord either through hard work or other people's generosity. Can these treasures be used to help out those who are less fortunate by donating to charities, organizations, individuals or the parish?

## To be a disciple of Christ, you Acept Christ's teachings.

When you truly love Christ and decide to follow Him, you are also accepting His teachings as a way of life. To be a disciple means to accept the teachings of the Master and trust that they are good and true - even if they are difficult at times. Disciples do not get to pick and choose which of Christ's teachings they want to follow and which ones they want to disregard. When that is done, you are putting more trust in your own judgment rather than Christ's. To accept Christ's teachings though, we need to know them! This is why continued faith formation throughout a disciple's life is so important. There is such a danger in thinking that you know enough about God or the Catholic Faith or that you have already "put in your time" and no longer need to grow. When you truly love Christ, you should always strive to know Him and His teachings more fully! By knowing His teachings, you can look at your life through the eyes of Christ and live in the way He would.

### **Reflection Questions**

- Do I love Christ fully? Does the way I live my life reflect my love for Christ?
- Do I believe in His teachings? Does the way I live my life and the decisions I make support my answer?
- Do I think it's important to know about Christ's teachings and the Catholic Faith?
- Do I want to learn more about Christ's teachings and the Catholic Faith?
- Do I think Christ's teachings are relevant to my life?
- Do I want to live my life like Christ lived His?

### **Examples of Action Steps**

- Stay away from the dangerous thought that you can know enough about God and the Catholic Faith and remember that Faith formation is a life long journey!
- Become more familiar with the 10 Commandments, the Precepts of the Catholic Church, the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and other teachings so you can live them out in your life.
- Commit yourself to growing in your faith as an individual. Check out the resources below that can be used at any time to learn more about the Faith, answer questions and grow in your understanding of Christ's teachings: Catechism of the Catholic Church, YouCat, Life Teen, Formed, Ascension Presents.
- Commit yourself to growing in your faith with others. Stay up to date on what is going on in the parish like Bible studies, events, talks, trips, retreats, etc. Check out the bulletin or stay updated with Flocknote notifications.
- Talk to Rose about getting together with friends in a small group. You can hang out with your friends and a mentor, talk about life, faith, God, relationships, etc. and discuss answers to some of your biggest questions.
- Commit yourself to growing in your faith at home and with your family. Spend time praying together, talking about the faith and attending Mass together. Parents can check out these resources too: Parent Life, Beyond the Pew.

## To be a disciple of Christ, you **I**ntentionally pray.

To keep up a healthy relationship with anyone, you must have regular communication with each other. Your relationship with the Lord is no different; you need to communicate with Him. It's through prayer that we can talk to God and we can do it at any time! Cultivating a prayer life takes effort, dedication and patience but over time, talking to Him and understanding when He speaks to you becomes easier. When you speak with the Lord regularly and work on listening to Him, your relationship will flourish! There are many ways that you can converse with the Lord and becoming familiar with the varieties of prayer can help you strengthen your relationship and communication with the Lord.

### **Reflection Questions**

- Do I take the time to pray each day?
- Do I take time to try and listen to God?
- Do I think more about my will for my life or God's will for my life?
- Do I take part in the highest form of prayer, the Mass, each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation?
- Do I desire to pray more?
- Am I willing to make an intentional decision to pray regularly?
- Am I familiar with different forms of prayer? Have I tried to incorporate them into my regular prayer time?

### **Examples of Action Steps**

- Make the decision to take time each day to pray. Have questions about praying? Find some answers in the Catechism, Lifeteen.com or talk to someone you know who has a strong prayer life.
- Be sure that you're taking part in the highest form of prayer there is, the mass, each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.
- Learn more about different forms of prayer: Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Lectio Divina, Adoration, Scripture, verbal prayer, meditation, contemplation, Stations of the Cross, Novenas, Praise and Worship, etc.
- Try incorporating different forms of prayer into your prayer life.
- Get into the routine of praying with your family or asking others if they'd like you to pray for something specific.

## To be a disciple of Christ, you **T**ell others & build faithful community.

Through Christ, you have access to the gift of everlasting life! if this is what you really believe, wouldn't you want to share that with others? Our faith is personal, but it isn't private. Christ was sent into the world to lead people to salvation and as His disciples, we are called to follow His lead and continue His mission to do the same. others will come to know Christ if they hear about Him and they will hear about Him only if disciples are willing to talk and share what they believe! Disciples are called as individuals to do His work, but they aren't called to do it alone! God is a community of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and He desires us to be a community of persons too. The more you surround yourself with others who are following Christ, the easier your own journey will be because you'll have the support, guidance and love of others walking beside you. Building community, just like building relationships, takes a conscious decision, effort and time - but it's always worth it!

### **Reflection Questions**

- Do I believe that through Christ I receive eternal life? Do I want to share this with others? Do I think it is important for others to know about Christ, the Church and salvation?
- What holds me back from sharing more about my faith? Am I willing to work on that?
- Would other people know I was Catholic by looking at how I live my life?
- Do I encourage others in their faith?
- Do I put in effort to be a part of the parish community and/or youth ministry?
- Am I a part of a small group?
- Do I surround myself with people who help me to become a more committed follower of Christ?
- Is there someone in my life that I already talk to about my faith?

### **Examples of Action Steps**

- Think about the relationships you have in your life and if there is someone you're already comfortable talking to about your faith. Continue having those conversations and receiving that support.
- As you learn more about your faith and grow in a deeper relationship with Christ, share that with others. If your faith is important to you, it should be important to those who care about you.
- Get to know others in your parish. The only way to do that is to be present! Go to Mass weekly, attend Youth Ministry events and parish wide gatherings.
- Talk to Rose about getting together with friends in a small group. You can hang out with your friends and a mentor, talk about life, faith, God, relationships, etc. and discuss answers to some of your biggest questions.
- Take a look at the people that you surround yourself with and who you spend the most time with. Do they support and love you? Do they bring out the best in you? Do they lead you closer to God?

## To be a disciple of Christ, you're Strengthened by the Sacraments.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by how you will ever or could ever become a disciple of Christ, there is good news! This isn't something you do by your own power or strength - it is something that can only be attained through God's grace! Yes, you need to make the decision whether you want to begin taking the steps toward discipleship but it is through grace that you are strengthened to continue those steps throughout your life. You can receive God's grace in many ways but it is through the Sacraments that you receive a special grace, called Sacramental grace. When someone meets Christ, falls in love with Him and begins to learn more about His teachings and His love for us, they will be drawn to the Sacraments. The Sacraments are such beautiful gifts because they give us the opportunity to come in direct contact with Christ!

### Reflection Questions

- Do I believe in the presence of Christ in the Sacraments?
- Do I desire to receive the Sacraments and the graces that come with them?
- Do I view the Sacraments as something to be earned or a gift to be received?
- Have I been Baptized?
- When was the last time I went to Confession? Do I go regularly, especially if I have committed a Mortal Sin?
- Do I attend Mass each Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation?
- Do I receive the Eucharist at Mass?
- Have I been Confirmed? Do I want to be Confirmed?

### Examples of Action Steps

- Take time to learn more about the Seven Sacraments, the graces that come with them and how we can be strengthened through them. Baptism, Confession, Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick.
- If you haven't received the Sacrament of Baptism yet and would like to, contact the St. Ambrose Parish Office for more information.
- Go to Reconciliation at least once a year but preferably much more regularly! Reconciliation times at our parish are: Saturday 8:30am at St. Monica, 3pm at St. Augustine or by appointment. Check out the Catechism or Lifeteen.com to learn more about the Sacrament and how to prepare yourself.
- Attend Mass each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation and receive the Eucharist if you've confessed any mortal sins you've committed.
- If you haven't received the Sacrament of Confirmation and would like to, look to the Catechism or Lifeteen.com to learn more about it or the St. Ambrose website to see what steps can be made to prepare yourself for the reception of it.
- If you've ever thought about the Priesthood or Religious Life, or would just like to learn more about either, check out the Archdiocese of Hartford Office of Vocations.
- Know someone who is seriously ill or about to undergo a serious surgery? Call the Parish Office to inquire about the Anointing of the Sick.