

"To Lead an Apostolic Community, Under Authority, That Brings People to Jesus Christ."

Bishop's Note: February 25, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Self Denial & Simplicity

This Lent, as we continue to examine the traditional Spiritual Disciplines, I'd like to look at two related disciplines - Self-Denial & Simplicity.

Neither of these disciplines are in sync with our modern culture. In fact, the whole concept of denying the self or living simply seems to set you aside as a little nutty at worst, and at best simply too poor to live otherwise. Twenty nine years ago, when I began my ministry at the Church of the Epiphany in East Los Angeles, I consciously decided to go without a television. I'd lived many years without one and wanted to spend my free time reading rather than zoning out in front of the TV. A couple of months after I moved in, there came a knock at my door one early evening. When I opened the door, there were all these parishioners standing on the porch and in the front yard and in the midst of them was a large TV. It seemed that my parishioners - all immigrants and all living on very small incomes - thought it just awful that their "padrecito" couldn't afford a TV, and they pitched in over several weeks in order to buy me a large, color TV with remote control. Needless to say, I was very touched and honored that they had sacrificed for me and were concerned about me. But the concept of wanting to live without was as strange for these brothers and sisters as it is for so many of us.

You see, the spiritual disciplines of self-denial and simplicity is not because it is forced through economic circumstances but that it is a choice to live more simply in order to place more emphasis and concentration upon the Lord.

King David wrote it so eloquently in Psalm 62 vs 5-7:

“5. For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.

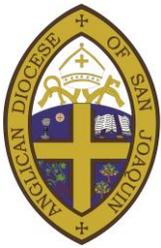
6. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

7. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.”

The spiritual disciplines of self-denial and simplicity help our soul to wait in silence for God, who is our hope, rock, salvation, fortress, and refuge!

As I write this Bishop's Note, I am at our mission in Henderson, Nevada. Jesus the Good Shepherd was able to move out of temporary space in a hotel ballroom to their own rented space in a light industrial park. The sanctuary is a large rectangular room that is beautifully appointed. The ceiling has been painted black, so that it simply disappears. The walls, up to about fifteen feet, are a warm yellow; the carpet is a dark sandy brown. Along the walls leading to the altar are icons of the saints, and it is almost as if everyone of them is pointing to the altar and the simple wooden cross above it with grape leaves carved into the beams. This is a very simple and direct space, yet, at the same time, warm and inviting. I love it! This space invites us to sit with the Lord and wait upon Him.

This Lent I would encourage you to consider the spiritual disciplines of self-denial and simplicity. Not because you have no other economic choice, but to live simply because, in living simply, you



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want to live more closely with the Lord and less distracted by the sights, sounds, and cares of the world around us.

I pray you all a very Holy Lent!

Bishop Menees