

CONFIRMATION HOMILY  
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“Go out to all the world, and tell the Good News!” (Mk 16:15)

This is the mission entrusted to all Christians by Jesus Christ. These words from the Gospel of Saint Mark summarize what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. This word - disciple - is the subject of much interest today, with books and articles being written about how to form disciples through the Church’s evangelizing and catechetical work. But just what is a disciple?

I think I can suggest an answer to that question by singing a song for you. “How Deep Is Your Love” is a pop song written and recorded by the Bee Gees in 1977. It was used as part of the soundtrack to the film *Saturday Night Fever*, among music’s top five best selling soundtrack albums. In the United States, “How Deep Is Your Love” topped the *Billboard* Hot 100 on December 24, 1977, and stayed in the Top 10 for a then-record 17 weeks.

How deep is your love,  
How deep is your love?  
I really need to learn  
Cause we're living in a world of fools  
Breaking us down  
When they all should let us be  
We belong to you and me  
I believe in you  
You know the door to my very soul  
You're the light in my deepest darkest hour  
You're my savior when I fall  
And you may not think  
That I care for you  
When you know down inside  
That I really do  
And it's me you need to show  
How deep is your love,  
How deep is your love?  
I really need to learn  
Cause we're living in a world of fools  
Breaking us down  
When they all should let us be  
We belong to you and me  
I believe in you

So what does this song from the *disco* era of the 1970's have to do with discipleship? Well, the lyrics suggest some answers if we consider the song as a conversation where we respond to God asking us the question, "How deep is your love?" Our answer is in the lines, "I believe in you ... You know the door to my very soul ... You're the light in my deepest darkest hour ... You're my savior when I fall ... And you may not think ... That I care for you ... When you know down inside ... That I really do."

Discipleship is our answer to the question that God asks us, "How deep is your love for me?" But the song also suggests another answer to me that comes from the word *disco*.

The word "disciple" has its roots in the word *disco* - not a genre of music from the 70s, but Latin for "I learn." The disciple is one who learns from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This learning is not from dusty tomes or ancient manuscripts, but from the very person of Jesus Christ, risen and alive today, through an immediate and personal relationship with him and his Church. This relationship does not - indeed, cannot - leave a person as he or she was before. The true disciple, then, is the one

who becomes such a student of the Master that his very life conforms to the life of Christ.

You may have seen the YouTube video, "Why I hate religion but love Jesus." That message has a certain popular appeal, but it is not what Jesus taught. Jesus founded the Catholic Church. He loves the Church. If you hate the Church, then you hate what Jesus loves and you reject the gift that He gave us. You cannot love Jesus without loving the Church along with the sacraments that He gave us as the path to His Father's heavenly Kingdom.

You have also heard the statistic that the second-largest religious group in the United States is non-practicing Catholics. So the choice here is stark: will you choose to be a disciple, to love Jesus and His Church, or after this Mass is over will you join those who walk out the door never to come back? That is the essence of what Confirmation is all about.

How deep is your love?

If your love is deep enough to make a commitment to be a disciple, a committed follower Jesus Christ, He will send the Holy Spirit to strengthen you in that commitment.

When I finish this homily, I will ask the Confirmation candidates a series of questions. They are taken from the creed that we recite every Sunday and Holy Day at Mass. I will be asking you if you believe in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I will be asking if you believe in the Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of your body and life everlasting.

These questions are asking you to commit yourself to a personal relationship with the Lord. What does that mean? When we have a personal relationship with someone, there is mutual communication and reciprocal giving of oneself to the other. If I ask you a question, most likely you would respond in some way. If I give you a gift, you would at least say thank you, and you might give me a gift in return.

That is what it means to be a Christian. That is what happens when we go to Mass. God speaks to us in the words of the Bible and the preaching of the bishop, priest or deacon that we hear during the first part of Mass. But then it is our turn to respond. Our response is the Creed or the renewal of baptismal promises when we say that we believe what God has spoken to us. Then Jesus gives us the gift of His love and His real Presence

in Holy Communion. We are called to say thank you, to reciprocate that love, and to put it effect in our lives when we are blessed at the end of Mass and sent forth to manifest God's love in the world through our words and actions.

It is only after we have intentionally dedicated ourselves as disciples - when the process of conversion has begun in our own hearts and we have taken up his cross - that we can in turn introduce Christ to others. Ultimately this leads to a complete transformation of a society which has embraced death, neglected the poor, and turned its back on the very source of our existence.

How deep is your love?

We can get a sense of your answer to that question by reading what you wrote in your questionnaires about the meaning of the Sacrament of Confirmation and how you plan to live out your Confirmation commitment. [read selected questionnaires]

Thank you for these profound expressions of your faith and commitment. I pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen you with His gifts.

May God give us this grace. Amen.