



THE POINT

Jesus teaches us, by word and example, what it means to live in the Kingdom of God and to whom the Kingdom belongs. As his disciples, we are challenged to commit ourselves to the Kingdom.

A Reign of Justice, Love, and Peace

Jesus taught people about God's love and how they could live in the Kingdom of God. In his parables, Jesus used images from daily life, work, and nature to help his listeners understand the meaning and implications of the Kingdom. The synoptic Gospels contain fifty-three passages that may be classified as parables, many of which are about the Kingdom.

Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of God is not a geographic place or an earthly, political kingdom. It is a relationship with God and other people that is one of justice, love, and peace. The Kingdom makes present God's love, action, and presence in the world.

- “[T]he kingdom of God has come near” (Mark 1:15). The Kingdom is present and active in Jesus. The coming of the Kingdom of God is closely connected with the person of Jesus. Jesus does not merely announce the coming of the Kingdom, as did the prophets of the Old Testament. He is the person through whom God establishes his reign. The progress of the Kingdom coincides with the destiny of Jesus, whose triumph is the Kingdom's triumph and establishment. The full coming of the Kingdom is still in the future and an object of hope and prayer as reflected in the Our Father: “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10).

- God calls everyone to enter the Kingdom; his Kingdom has no boundaries. According to Jesus, his Kingdom belongs especially to those who are poor and lowly. These people are without worldly influence or the means to protect themselves against injustice and oppression. Jesus teaches that anyone wishing to enter the Kingdom must first show an

active love toward those who are poor.

- To enter the Kingdom of God, one must truly seek it. To say we believe is not enough; we must show it through our actions. Faith in God and his Kingdom calls us to conversion and to a radical choice. We must not only turn away from sin; sometimes we must also sacrifice earthly goods, status, or privilege in order to follow Jesus. We must “sell all” in order to purchase the “pearl of great value” (Matthew 13:46).

- We gain access to the Kingdom of God through the Church. Jesus gives the keys to God's Kingdom to Peter, who is to be the leader of his Church (see Matthew 16:19, 18:18).



LIVING AS A DISCIPLE

- **Testimony** Discipleship is action. The practice of testimony is about representing the Kingdom of God with your actions and your words. Spend the next week looking at how you treat people, how often you pray, and how you participate in the liturgy and in other Church functions. If someone were watching you for the week, would they know you believe in Jesus? If not, what needs to change?

- **Thy will be done** Every time you pray the Our Father, you pray that “thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” From now on, try slowing down at this part and really reflecting on what gets in the way of the Kingdom coming in your own life. Be open to listening to God’s response.

PRAYER: *Loving Father, help us to live our lives in a way that reflects the love your Son brought to the world.*



PERSON OF FAITH

Damien De Veuster (1840–1889)

Damien De Veuster, a native of Belgium, was ordained a priest in Honolulu at the age of twenty-four. Nine years later he volunteered to minister on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. At that time, Hansen’s Disease (also known as leprosy) was untreatable, and Molokai was a leper colony. Molokai was known as the Devil’s Island, not only because of the disease of its inhabitants, but also because it was lawless and isolated from the rest of the world. Sometimes healthy people accompanied loved ones exiled to Molokai and some children were born there. In the end, most people there died of leprosy. Father Damien believed that Christians are called to work with God to bring about God’s Kingdom, even in that desolate place. Over time, he sought donations and worked with the government to improve the physical situation of the community. More importantly, Father Damien won the people over and brought many back to the practice of their faith. Devil’s Island became a true community, a foretaste of the Kingdom of God on earth. In 1885, Father Damien was diagnosed with leprosy, but he continued to work for God’s Kingdom until his death.



THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP

- Why do you want to belong to the Kingdom?

- What are the challenges of being a disciple?