

Celebration of Discipline

What is Christian discipline?



“Living the God-life”

living as Christ and

allowing our wills to be conformed to the will of God as Christ’s is;

...live in harmony with God’s will

“Discipline” in Christian Spirituality



More than just modeling...

...the heart of discipline and being a disciple

*Is to have the heart changed
so that our wills are infused by
and in union with the will of God*

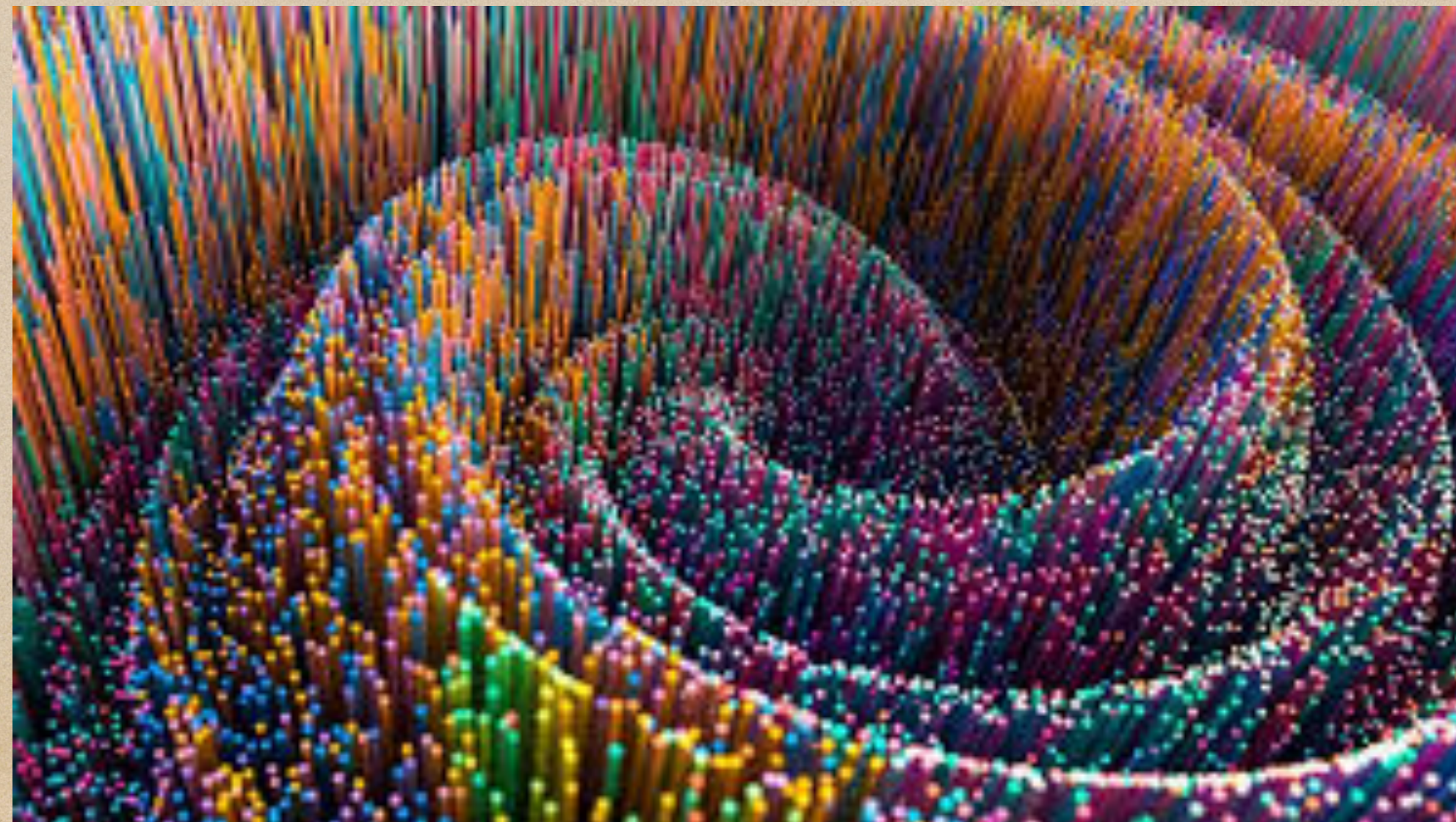
It is to die to the self...

Galatians 2:19-20 — “For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

DISCIPLINES

TOOLS BY WHICH OUR WILLS ARE BROUGHT INTO GOD'S WILL

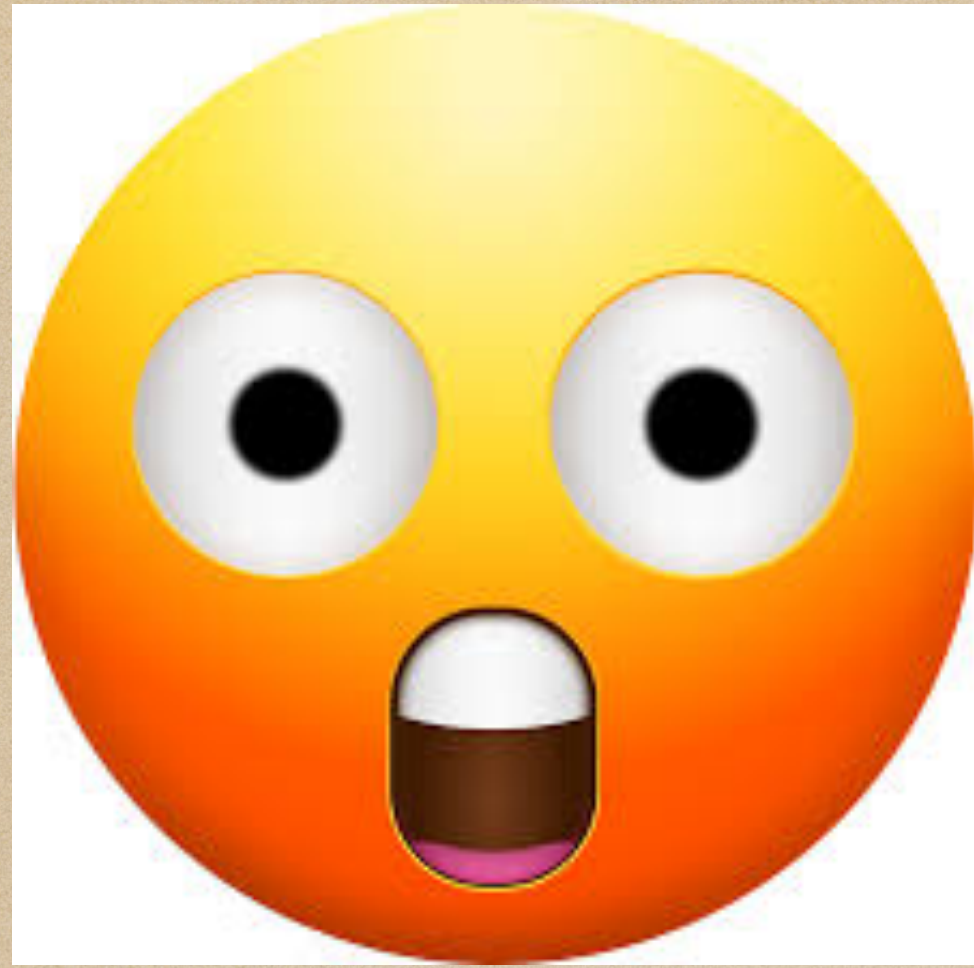
“By ‘disciplines’ we understand consciously undertaken or chosen activities that enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort. ‘Spiritual disciplines’ are such activities, but ones specifically relevant to growth and attainment in the spiritual life. Hence, they are major factors in spiritual formation. They are a major part of what we can do to contribute to our own spiritual formation.” (Dallas Willard, PhD)



SPIRITUAL FORMATION & HABITS

(Dallas Willard, PhD)

“Christian spiritual formation...**is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite ‘form’ or character**...the inner human world is being formed so that **it takes on the character of the inner being of Christ himself**. In the degree to which it is successful, the outer life of the individual **becomes a natural expression or outflow** of the character and teachings of Jesus.” [*developed habits*]



HERESY ALERT: Pelagianism

**We don't change (save) ourselves...
...the Spirit does through God's Grace.**

Transformation is a gift from God.

We can only put ourselves in position to receive the gift.



Disciplines are only a means to an end

...a means of receiving God's gift of union with God

Disciplines become doorways to liberation



habits are always motivated by LOVE of God
— our love of God and God's love for us



7 Pitfalls of the Disciplines

1. **Turning disciplines into laws**
2. **Misunderstanding the social implications of the disciplines
(not hiding from world but engaging head on)**
3. **Viewing the disciplines as virtuous in themselves**
4. **Centering on the disciplines rather than on Christ**
5. **Elevating one discipline and neglecting the others**
6. **Thinking ANY list of disciplines exhausts the means of God's grace**
7. **(Most Dangerous) Study the disciplines without experiencing them**



**Union with God through Christ by the Holy Spirit
who changes us on the inside**

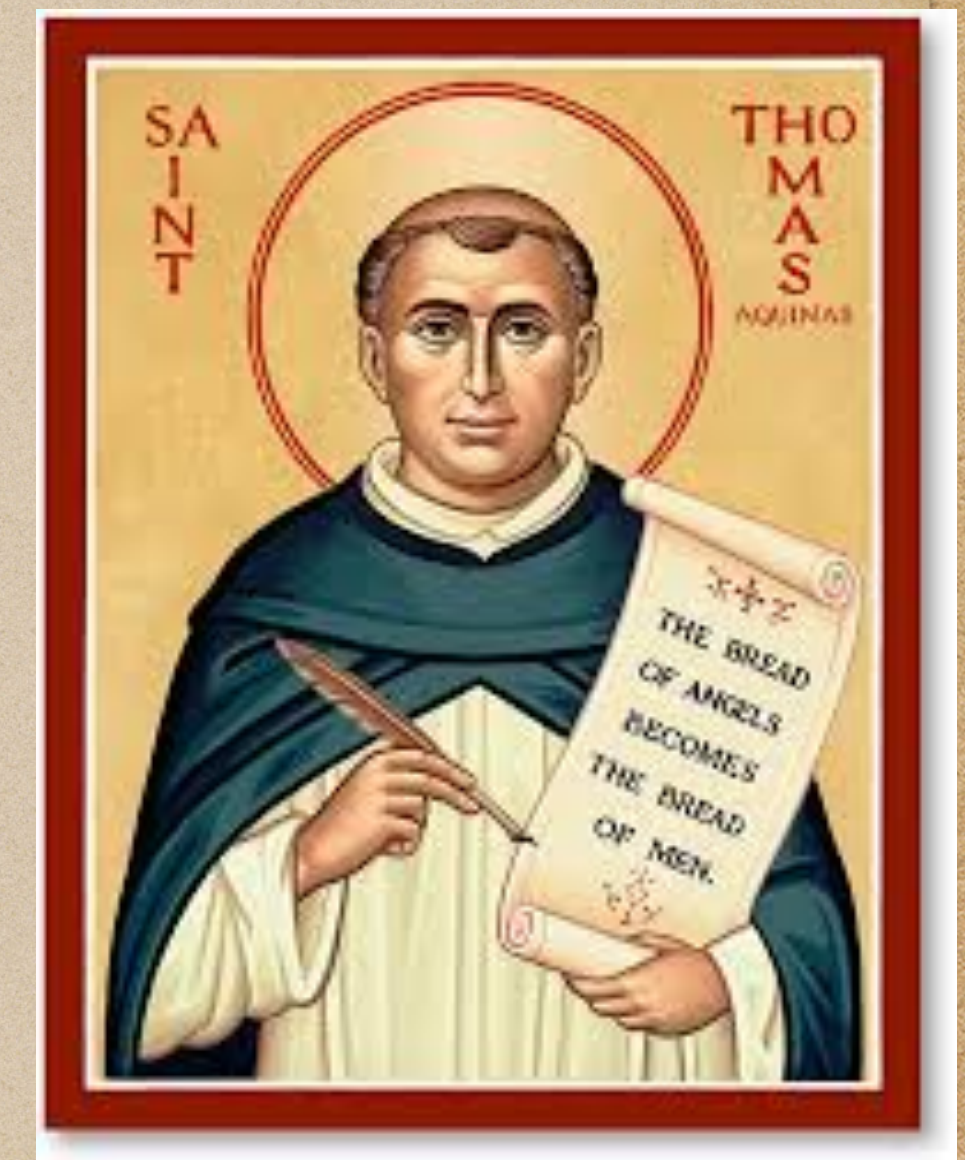
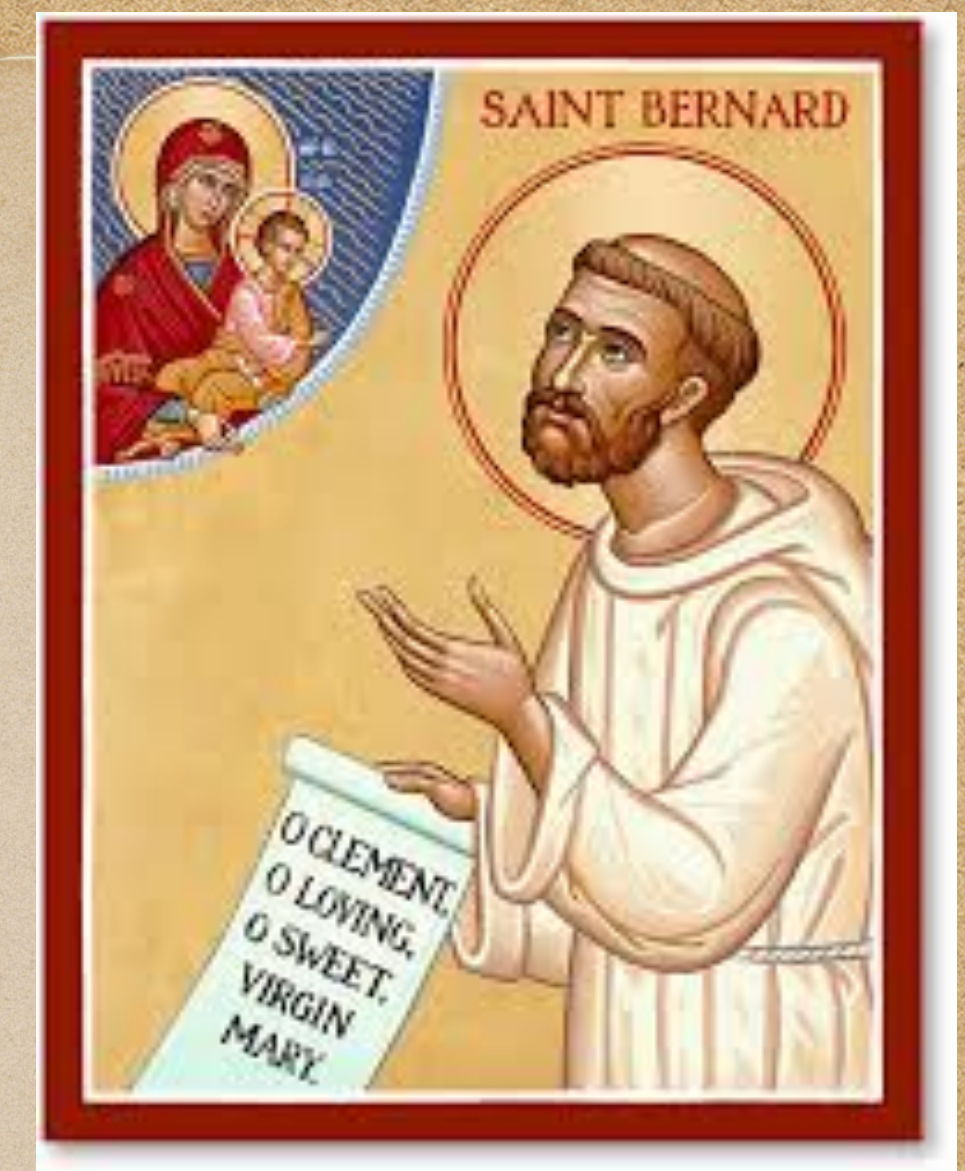
John 17:20-24 — Jesus prayed, “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

MEDITATION

What is it?



- **Thomas Merton:** *“To exercise the mind and serious reflection. This is the broadest possible sense of the word. The term in this sense...implies serious mental activity in a certain absorption or concentration, which does not permit our faculties to wander off at random or to remain slack and undirected.”*
- **St. Bernard of Clairvaux (12th c.)/St. Thomas Aquinas (13th c.):** *inquisitio veritatis (quest for truth)*
 - NOT the same as to “study”
 - (Merton: “In study, we can be content with an idea or a concept that is true. We can be content to know about truth. Meditation is for those who are not satisfied with merely objective and conceptual knowledge about life, about God, about ultimate realities. They want to **enter into an intimate contact with truth itself, with God.** They want to **experience the deepest realities of life by living them.** Meditation is the means to that end.”)
- **Foster:** “Meditation is primarily a matter of thought (reflection). But it does not end in thought as study does. Meditation is simply the beginning of a process leading communion with God.”





The Devil's System (Foster)

Noise




Hurry

CROWDS



HEARING & OBEYING



"The body at work but the thought with God - such should be the state of a true Christian."


SAINT THEOPHAN
THE RECLUSE

www.ProtectingVeil.com

- Meditation is the ability to intimately HEAR God's voice and OBEY God's word (Adam/Eve, Moses, Prophets, Jesus...)
- Christ has not stopped speaking — but we've lost touch with hearing

Theophan the Recluse — "To meditate is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever present, all seeing, within you."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer — "When asked why he meditated, replied, 'Because I'm a Christian.'"



The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. The call of Christ sets up a barrier between man and his natural life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Purpose of Meditation

(Remember, as a discipline, it is a means to an end)

- Meditation creates the emotional/spiritual space for Christ
 - Christ initiates union with him by coming into fellowship with us in the heart
 - Internally — introspective awareness is developing
 - Externally — spiritual intuition is becoming sensitized (detecting Spirit movement around you — living the God-life)

“have to” → “want to”
(love is taking over)

Preparing to Meditate

(preparing to hear/obey amidst noise, hurry, crowds)

- Time
- Place/Environment
- Posture

Let's try...

TRYING TO
HEAR IN
SILENCE



QUESTIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

