

"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1-2.

Dear Christian friends,

The life of the Christian is a life of discipleship. The North American Lutheran Church has deemed discipleship to be one of the most critical issues that Christians in North America need to address. The key elements in a healthy Christian discipleship are Prayer, Scripture and Service. It is living our faith on a day to day basis. Discipleship is engaged by the individual and leads into the community. It is like playing one's individual part to fulfill the needs of the team. Good discipleship makes a person a participating member of the team.

That discipleship is part of the Christian life has been stressed throughout the history of the Church. Jesus called people specifically to follow him. They became his disciples. Jesus further stresses the need to continue in that discipleship. People baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are called to take up their cross and follow Jesus. The writer of Hebrews stressed to the early Christians the call to run the race set before them with perseverance. This is our call. It is to determine who and what Jesus wants each individual to do for the sake of Jesus' love. That means we all do not have the same task to attend to. We aren't all called to do the exact same job. But every baptized Christian has a course to follow – their race to run.

Many people will attend try-out camps for sports, culture and community leagues. Each participant will be longing to land a place on the team or in the club. Every enrollee knows that they will need to exert significant effort if they are serious about their hopes. They will discipline themselves and be disciples to coaches and trainers. Our NALC Bishop emeritus, John Bradosky has run in the prestigious Boston Marathon on numerous occasions. Every runner in that race must qualify to be considered an entrant. That means every runner has to have run other marathons to be considered for the Boston Marathon. Bishop John knows that every time he wins a spot in the race, he must continue his training regimen. He must be fit for the race if he wants success in his endeavor.

This is the same way that people of God can undertake discipleship. We can set a daily regimen to follow that will assist us in attaining the goal we long for. September is a reset time in our culture as we establish a routine for the months to follow. This is a good time to evaluate where our personal Christian discipleship program is at; tweak it where it is lacking and continue to build one's self up where it is good. Time for personal devotion, scripture study, worship and prayer can happen daily and throughout our day. Service in the world will become a fruit of that discipline. More information is available on the NALC website (www.thenalc.org).

In Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.