

Discipline: *useful or useless?*

No, please do not stop reading... This word conjures up memories for some of harsh treatment or punishment, coldness or lack of love. Some may come up with 'spare the rod and spoil the child' etc. etc. – but let us look more closely at the real significance of the purpose and interpretation of this much hated word, especially today. Some may even associate it with religious communities and physical actions to subdue the body and keep it under control. But how far from the truth is this very limited interpretation of its purpose.

The word comes from the word *discipulus* – disciple, and what they practise is *disciplina* – discipline. The word comes from the Latin *discere* – to learn, not what you might expect. To discipline therefore is to bring under control, to train to obedience, to drill, to go through moral and mental training.

How strange is it that we have so rejected the 'word' and its meaning. Yet, who but ourselves, mostly require it, we who are called to be disciples of Jesus? Where would we be without the moral guidance on crucial ethical issues or practices which help us pray and discern?

But let us step back a little and reflect. Looking recently at the 57,000 runners taking part in the Great North Run I was thinking of the hours of training that this requires and with the purpose often to support good causes. The greater the speed the more dedicated the service and giftedness too. Curiously the greater the talent the more dedication to training that is required. However genius the runner the greater his discipline has to be in order to achieve his success.

Whoever heard of anyone in virtually any job that did not have to prepare carefully, observe certain rules and protocols and go through some sort of training, which included do's and don'ts. It is a part of the everyday that we prepare for those parts of our life that require discipline. Yet when our practice of our faith is involved we shy away from this.

Prayer requires daily input and pondering. Many countless thousands of people have become holy as a result of a meticulous praying of the Rosary (Our Lady's Feast this month!). Others have dedicated part of their day in a routine manner for other prayer, Mass etc... Others spend time reading spiritual books. All this requires discipline as it requires us to be 'observant', dedicated and steadfast. It requires us to 'listen' to the Master and follow Him in the things that He requires of us. This is not only to be obedient but to be aware of His teachings as true disciples. This self-discipline is a vital element of success. What if a surgeon was lax at careful preparation, handwashing etc., or those preparing food did not do this hygienically? Self-discipline is essential to any task in order to perform it to the best of our ability.

Even more deeply, self-discipline is required to keep away from those things that lead us away from God. This may be sinful things, greed, lust, jealousy, and sometimes may even require *heroic virtue*, the type saints are made of. Innate in human nature is our ability to excuse ourselves of many faults and it may require great self-discipline to avoid the situations that lead us into dangerous waters.

The disciples of Jesus also sometimes did not understand and asked themselves what Jesus meant – it seemed harsh and difficult; 'When the disciples heard this...etc.' They murmured amongst themselves – "does that mean us too?" they sometimes asked. It is never easy to listen, learn and be obedient but that is the way of any disciple or follower of **The Way**.

But what of the other discipline, that of others, imposed on us by virtue of others' authority in work or play and life in general? If someone transgresses and 'steps over the line' there are many ways that they can be corrected. If it a matter of Law, it will be dealt with thus. But what of correction that results out of minor faults and failings? We are told that correction is a part of growth in the Spirit.

Clearly this has always to have the good of the other person in mind, and has always to be just. But it is a failing not to correct, though always with gentility, patience and kindness. Sadly it is not always welcome as we are often so self-sufficient and self-indulgent that the fault is often regarded as the other person's and not ours. It is an honest person that receives and is grateful for correction. We must of course be guarded as often we accuse others of the faults we have ourselves, and as the sign goes – pointing one finger at others, we must be aware that three are pointing back to us. Being corrected can be a blessing if we accept it in the right spirit. Saint Paul makes much of the responsibility of correction.

But what of the discipline that is part of the very nature of a job, I speak of 'Parental Responsibility' and perhaps of 'Spiritual Leadership'? Today it seems that parents are almost scared to correct their children and many children spend time criticizing their parents. I am not speaking of harsh treatment here, or even any involving violence of any kind, but the correction that leads to understanding of rôle and responsibility. It is a duty of all parents to school their children in obedience, love, kindness, compassion, tolerance, gratitude and importantly, *faith*. Sometimes it requires great resolve but with unconditional love at its base, this can and must be done. Allowing children to do wrong things for fear of 'losing them' or 'upsetting' them, clearly is an erroneous interpretation of love. Parents have a duty to guide and discipline their children. Through many ways the Lord corrects us and brings us in line through many situations in our lives, through which we learn day by day. He gives us good things and sometimes they are efficacious by correction and discipline.

'No pain – no gain' the saying goes: as in all change or improvement there is an element of pain. However, to be disciplined about our faith, committed to serve, love and forgive requires a great deal of personal self-correction and discipline – and sometimes determination. We do not do so by our own efforts solely as we are helped along the way by Grace and the Maker's care. We will be helped in all our endeavours, but we have to care enough to practice. As we all know practice makes perfect. Saint Paul said the following: (1 Cor. 9 24-27)...
"All this I do for the Gospel's sake, in order to

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share in its blessings. Surely you know that many runners take part in a race but only one of them wins the prize. Run, in such a way as to win the prize. Every athlete in training submits to strict discipline, in order to be crowned with a wreath that will not last; but we do it for one that lasts forever. That is why I run straight for the finishing line; that is why I am like a boxer who does not waste his punches. I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control to keep myself from being disqualified after having called others to the contest."

Are we willing to try?

Halina Holman

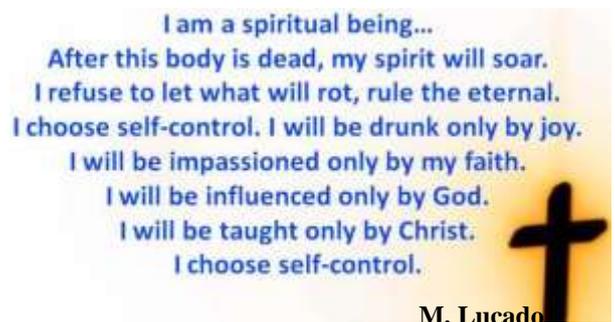
Pope Francis and Discipline...

"God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline," (citing Saint Paul).

Two things work against 'living faith', 'the spirit of timidity and shame'.

God has not given us a spirit of timidity. The spirit of timidity goes against the gift of faith, keeps it from growing, moving forward, and becoming great. Shame, on the other hand, is the sin that says: "Yes, I have faith, but I conceal it so that it doesn't show too much." Shame makes us dabble in the faith without committing, because we're "ashamed to live it seriously."

Rome 2013



M. Lucado

Papal Prayer: That journalists, in carrying out their work may always be motivated by respect for truth and a strong sense of ethics.

Feasts in October

1st St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus & the Holy Face,

4th St. Francis of Assisi,

5th St. Faustyna

7th Our Lady of the Rosary

15th St. Teresa of Avila

17th St. Ignatius of Antioch, 18th St. Luke,

19th St. John de Brébeuf & Co.

22nd St. John Paul II. Pope

28th Ss. Simon & Jude, Apostles