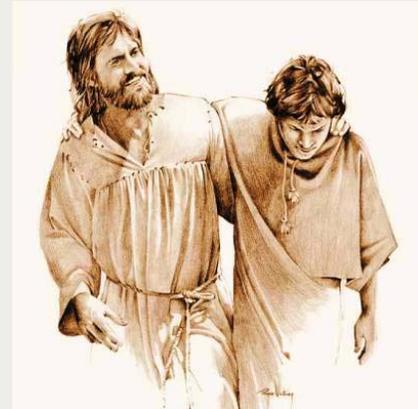


CHRIST, THE GREATEST EXAMPLE

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As we have seen thus far in our course studies there is a great need for the practice of Pastoral theology in our times. The field of pastoral theology has grown considerably since the Second Vatican Council, but as in any ministry it is not without its challenges. Although pastoral planning is helpful to execute the mission of this broad ministry it also has many glitches or obstacles. We often like to blame many of these challenges to on external issues such as, inadequate materials, space or formation, even not having enough people or vocations which without a doubt all contribute to the challenges; but in my humble opinion our fallen nature, lack of conviction and conversion often provide many obstacles to our ministry. Although, self-knowledge and knowing these temptations beforehand can help us plan and prepare so these obstacles don't take away from our mission. In Pope Francis' Apostolic Encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, he comments on this same idea. He states, "*The Gospel, the most beautiful message that this world can offer, is buried under a pile of excuses*".¹ What type of excuses do we give others or do others give us and the Lord as to why they cannot participate in the ministry that is needed. We are very good at convincing ourselves that we are too busy, that what I do will not really make a difference, or that someone else will do it. All these justifications are simply lies from the enemy, he wants us to sit back and not do anything. Pope Francis continues, "*It also happens that our hearts can tire of the struggle because in the end we are caught up in ourselves*".² Meaning we can create more struggles thinking that the Gospel message is all about us instead of centering it on Christ. Although this is contrary to what Christ did while he was here on earth he did not let the fact that he only had 12 disciples stop him from commanding them to go to the whole world; nor did having only five fish and two loaves stop him from feeding 5,000 pilgrims with food to spare. These obstacles that Christ faced are ones that we also will face and we are to have the same faith and trust that he will act in and through our weaknesses and poverty. Besides we are not preaching about us nor are we called to gain followers of ourselves but to Christ, his is the protagonist of our message guided by the Holy Spirit.



We never forget that Christ is our model and teacher giving us the greatest example of evangelization and the practice of pastoral theology. Our mission and our message must remain Christocentric. Proverbs 29: 18 says, "*Where there is no vision people perish*". Christ must be our vision and we must go to him to lay our foundation and prayerfully ask him to guide our planning, entrusting all to his care and remaining rooted in him throughout our mission. May we also be conscience to not only invoke him but to follow his example closely. "*Since this mission goes on and in the course of history unfolds the mission of Christ Himself, who was sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, the Church, prompted by the Holy Spirit, must walk in the same path on which Christ walked: a path of poverty and obedience, of service and self - sacrifice to the death, from which death He came forth a victor by His resurrection.*"³

¹ Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation, November 24, 2013, 277.

² EG, 277

³ Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church; *Ad Gentes*, Dec. 7, 1965, 5

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