

## **OUR LADY OF LOURDES PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP**

**Background:** Our Lord's final command to his apostles was that they "make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19). Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church exists to carry out this mission in our corner of Bettendorf.

**Path of Discipleship:** As we support people in their response to Jesus' invitation to discipleship we recognize the importance of helping them see a clear path of discipleship. This path of discipleship will guide our evangelistic, catechetical, and missionary activities.

This path of discipleship is marked by three distinct, yet interrelated phases. It begins with an initial **encounter** with Jesus Christ, continues as we **grow** in our knowledge and love of the Lord, and leads us to respond to the Gospel call to **serve** God and our neighbor.

**Encounter** events and ministries are intended to facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ and His Church. They are focused on introducing people to the Good News, proclaiming the *kerygma* in such a way as to invite a response. This response is characterized by repentance of sin, conversion of heart, and decision of faith.

Those who participate in an encounter event at Our Lady of Lourdes will be invited to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, and challenged to commit to basic habits of discipleship.

Examples of encounter events might include Vacation Bible School, CEW retreats, parish missions, or similar events.

**Grow** events and ministries are intended to help people mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church. They are designed to communicate the content of the faith in such a way as to help those who have committed to a life of discipleship better understand, appreciate, and live the Gospel. This takes place as we study the Scriptures, encounter God through Liturgy and the Sacraments, learn about the faith through Systematic Catechesis, and experience Authentic Christian Community.

Examples of grow events might include Bible Studies, Religious Education, Lourdes Catholic School, or similar events.

**Discipleship Habits** such as prayer, the Sacraments, study, evangelization, and stewardship, must be taught in practical and engaging ways so that growing disciples can be empowered with the skills they need to mature in their faith.

**Serve** events and ministries encourage disciples to become missionary disciples, sharing the gifts they have received with their community and with the world. Our Lady of Lourdes has a responsibility to help "equip the saints for the work of ministry," (Ephesians 4:12). This includes our response to our vocational calling (whether to the priesthood, permanent diaconate, consecrated life, or married life), as well as ministry (service within the church), and mission (service outside the church).

Examples of serve events might include work with the Food Pantry, our sister parish in Peru, or pro-life ministries.

While a single event or ministry will always have a primary focus (Encounter, Grow, or Serve), the nature of Christian discipleship is such that a single event or ministry will often lead to a deepening of another area. For example, it is only natural to experience an encounter while engaging in ministry.