

Commentary: Discipleship in the era of social media: Jesus doesn't have a Twitter Account

03/09/2017 BY [HAWAII CATHOLIC HERALD](#)

STEWARDSHIP

By **Melissa Pavlicek, Paul Pancho and Father Ed Popish, SSCC** *Special to the Herald*

“Follow me” (Mt. 9:9). Jesus invitation is not a request to follow him on Twitter. Jesus does not have a Twitter account. There are no daily twitter feeds or hashtags to follow him. There is no Facebook page where we can “like” Christ or “friend” him. He does not have a professional page on LinkedIn for us to join. Although the word “discipleship” has its roots the basic sense of being a follower, its meaning is much different than that used in modern social media. Following Jesus means being a disciple and making disciples of others.

One of the important ways we come to know Christ is through other disciples, who, mature in their discipleship, take to heart the great commission. This means that we need to forge connections with others, to be a disciple, to learn from disciples and to help form disciples, to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations ...” (Mt. 28:19a). Through evangelizing, speaking, writing, photographing, videotaping, Facebook posting, and person-to-person talking about the life of Jesus, these disciples lead others to follow Christ. Through their personal stories of their relationship with Christ, they invite others. “Come, and you will see.” (Jn. 1:39)

In her book “Forming Intentional Disciples,” Sherry Weddell speaks of the five thresholds of conversion for those invited to come and see. They are initial trust, spiritual curiosity, spiritual openness, spiritual seeking and intentional discipleship. The path involves an initial trust of something or someone associated with Christ, which arouses a curiosity about the person of Jesus, asking questions and moving to an openness to God and the possibility of spiritual change. The next step is actively exploring a relationship with Christ. It is a time of prayer and listening to the journeys of other new disciples.

The final threshold is the genuine commitment to Christ and the personal decision to follow him as his disciple. This is not following him on Twitter or communicating with him on Instagram. We cannot be his virtual disciples. We become disciples by dedicating our lives to Christ and embracing a life of ongoing conversion. We draw closer to Christ

deepening our personal relationship to him through prayer and Scripture. We grow and mature in our discipleship in our one-on-one connection to other disciples.

In “talking story,” sharing the stories of our faith with one another in the great oral tradition of the Hawaiian culture, we grow in discipleship in communion with one another, nourished by our belonging to a faith ohana. We live discipleship with aloha, giving to others the gifts of love, peace, justice, tolerance and mercy. What you can do now to become a disciple of Jesus is to connect with others who are already disciples, to evangelize those who do not yet know Jesus and to live as a true and meaningful follower.

Leisa Anslinger and Stephanie Moore point out in “Building Bridges to the Heart of Discipleship” that as disciples grow in the willingness to embrace Christ’s self-giving way, they grow in the way of stewardship. “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” (1 Peter 4:10) As Father Andrew Kemberling pointed out in his keynote address at the 2017 Diocesan Stewardship Day in Honolulu, we understand how to be good stewards through the core values of identity, trust, gratitude and love. Growing in discipleship we come to realize that all is gift entrusted to us by God to be stewarded well. We belong to God, we trust God for all of our needs, and we live our lives with gratitude and charity, as stewards of God’s gifts.

The authors are members of the diocesan Stewardship and Development Commission. They recently attended an annual International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) conference in New Orleans with 20 other clergy and lay people from Hawaii.