

A discipleship of beauty and the beauty of discipleship: Re-thinking Christian discipleship with scripture and theology

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**A Discipleship of Beauty and the Beauty of Discipleship:
Re-thinking Christian Discipleship with Scripture and Theology**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for a License in Sacred Theology**

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Introduction

Christian discipleship is often described as following Jesus and his example of loving God and neighbor. It is rooted in, animated by and directed towards realizing fully one's personal and intimate relationship with Jesus.

Gerhard Lohfink echoes this observation. For him, discipleship is “not an idea or a purely inward disposition” because it “exists only as a concrete, visible, tangible event” of following Jesus in how he lived out his relationship with God and with others.¹ The word “follow” in the Gospels, Lohfink notes, is used theologically in its verbal form (*akolouthein*), not in its noun form (*akolouthēsis*, meaning “fellowship” or “discipleship”). Thus, Christian discipleship involves at heart the *active* following of Jesus' way of loving and living with God and neighbor. Beginning with Jesus' call, discipleship is inspired by his life and ministry, and is directed towards sharing with him the communion he has with God and all creation, including humankind. Believers can hear, respond to, and live out Jesus' call to discipleship because of the Holy Spirit. It is in the Spirit that they can share in Jesus' mission, which witnesses to the good news that God's love saves. Hence, discipleship is for salvation, which is the basis of its hope. At the heart of discipleship is the encounter with God: disciples come to know God and speak about God to others by following Jesus.

“How can I know and speak about God?” is a question believers find themselves asking as they follow Jesus. It is in fact an essential question for Christian discipleship. One asks it at the beginning of one's journey of faith as a disciple. It is a question many continue to engage as their discipleship matures. And, it remains the question, always asked in hope and in its

¹ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2012), 73.

past tense, by disciples when they evaluate their discipleship as death draws near because they hope their answer affirms the Christian lives they have lived.

The present context of Christian discipleship: challenges and possibilities

It is especially important to ask the question, “How can I know and speak about God?” in the present context in which Christian disciples live and practice their faith. This is because contemporary realities make it difficult for them to accomplish these well.

Some of these realities present resistances disciples must overcome in order to live their Christian faith and life fully. Secularization, economic disparity, and progress in science and technology have brought about significant socio-cultural changes. These have profoundly affected “a person’s perception of self and the world, and consequently, a person’s way of believing in God.”² They have weakened faith in God and “the ability to bear witness to the Gospel.”³ They have also impacted the Church negatively: it is experiencing a weakening of ecclesial faith, a diminished regard among the faithful for the magisterium’s authority, a decline in religious practices, and a disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations.⁴ These realities challenge disciples in two particularly concrete ways. First, contemporary scientific progress and postmodern culture have led to increasing skepticism about the truth concerning God. Second, society’s continuing structural injustices against the poor and oppressed repeatedly call into doubt God’s goodness. Both create a tension that Christians have to reconcile between their belief in God and society’s critique of this belief. Both also harden non-Christians towards receiving the Good News.

² Committee for the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization, *Instrumentum laboris*, §6 (Vatican City: Vatican Publishing House, 2012).

³ *Ibid.*, §7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, §48.

This is moreover the right question for disciples to ask at this time when the Church calls for “a new evangelization; new in its ardor, methods and expression.”⁵ The goal of this new evangelization, according to *Instrumentum laboris*, the working document from the Synod on the New Evangelization in 2012, is to re-energize individuals’ faith and to encourage missionary zeal in order to better transmit Christian faith in and to today’s world.⁶ In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis asserts that this is the task of all the baptized: “whatever their position in Church or their level of instruction in the faith,” they are “agents of evangelization.”⁷ In order to do this in a relevant and meaningful way in the face of the contemporary realities identified above, the question, “How can I know and speak about God?” encourages us to think anew about what present-day discipleship can be and how it can be practiced.

This thesis embraces this challenge by claiming Beauty as the appropriate optic to relook at Christian discipleship. Beauty, I want to argue, offers itself as the renewed way to reflect on seeing, speaking about, and proclaiming God in today’s world. Beauty has always been part of how believers, from early Christians to present-day theologians, have reflected theologically on God and on the human longing to see and speak about God.⁸ For David Bentley Hart, “beauty is a category indispensable to Christian thought; all that theology says of the life of God, the gratuity of creation, the incarnation of the Word, and the salvation of the world makes room for—and indeed depends on—a thought, and a narrative, of the

⁵ Ibid., §45.

⁶ These aims are discussed in the Preface of *Instrumentum laboris*, vi-v.

⁷ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §120. Accessed as <http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/> on 25 November 2013.

⁸ Two books that provide an overview of the theological discussion about Beauty, including an historical survey, are Bruno Forte’s *The Portal of Beauty: Towards a Theology of Aesthetics*, trans. David Glenday and Paul McPartlan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); and *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader*, ed. Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

beautiful.”⁹

Beauty has not, however, always been part of the conversation about discipleship. This is because discipleship has been more commonly thought of in terms of proclaiming the intellectual truth about God or enacting the moral goodness of God. According to Bishop James Conley, these ways of understanding discipleship are problematic today: “many people, especially in modern Western Culture, are too intellectually and morally confused” to proclaim and to receive the Good News.¹⁰ Beauty, he proposes, can be the more meaningful way disciples can evangelize in the face of present-day realities: “When we begin with beauty, this can lead to a desire to want to know the truth of the thing that is drawing us, a desire to participate in it. And then the truth can inspire us to do the good, to strive after virtue.”¹¹ Writing in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis reflects on “the way of beauty” for evangelization: “Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties.”¹²

The observations Conley and Pope Francis make on beauty echo those of Hans Urs von Balthasar. For Balthasar, beauty is as important as truth and goodness are in theologizing about who God is and what God does.¹³ More pertinently for this thesis, his theology suggests that a disciple sees and speaks about God through, with, and in Jesus, who is the objective and

⁹ David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 16.

¹⁰ Bishop James Conley, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: The Role of Beauty in the Restoration of Catholic Culture,” *Crisis Magazine*, accessed as <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2013/ever-ancient-ever-new-the-role-of-beauty-in-the-restoration-of-catholic-culture> on 10 January 2014.

¹¹ Conley, “Ever Ancient, Ever New.”

¹² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §176.

¹³ Hans Urs von Balthasar develops this argument in *The Glory of the Lord, A Theological Aesthetics, Volume I: Seeing the Form*, trans. E. Leivà-Merkakis, J. Fessio and J. Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2nd edition, 2009).

revelatory form of God's beauty. The beauty of God that Jesus manifests is the glory of God's love that saves on the Cross and transforms—or, more correctly, transfigures—in the Resurrection. Disciples experience and participate in God's beauty in Jesus' Spirit, who also enables them to continue his mission in the world. This way of encountering God—through the optic of Beauty—offers three key insights into a disciple's experience of following Jesus as the foundation, model, and goal of discipleship. First, the experience of beauty opens one up to God, even before one exercises reason to know the truth of God or practices morality to experience the goodness of God. Second, in experiencing beauty, one's understanding of God as true and good can be affirmed and enriched. Third, the experience of beauty always orientates a person towards God's enduring love. These insights are important; they suggest that the optic of beauty challenges how Christian discipleship is presently understood, even as it can contribute towards rethinking it for today. This is the focus and concern of my thesis.

The possibility of a discipleship of beauty: raising the question

“How can I know and speak about God?” is indeed the question that motivates this thesis. It asks this question to help today's disciples answer it with the following tripartite approach in order to find a theologically meaningful response: identifying a space where today's disciples can see God; finding a way to understand how they can see, know, and speak about God; and describing how they can practice speaking about God in word and deed in and to the world.

However, because this thesis is using the optic of Beauty to rethink how today's disciples can see, know, and speak about God by following Jesus, there is a need to nuance this question. Fine-tuning this question better guides this theological reflection on discipleship. This is necessary because, if the focus of Christian discipleship is Jesus, and

Jesus is indeed the form of God's beauty, then this reality of who Jesus is must also and distinctively inform one's discipleship.

The more specific question this thesis now asks is, "How can following Jesus as the form of God's beauty enable a discipleship of beauty that better sees, understands, and speaks about God today?" The challenge in asking this question is to consider what would inform a discipleship of beauty and what would be its form. Using the tripartite approach identified above, we need to ask, what could be the scriptural basis, the theology behind it and the appropriate spirituality to ground, explain and enable its practice. This thesis will do this by developing the following response over three chapters.

Chapter 1 will engage John's Gospel to consider what Christian discipleship can be. It will demonstrate this by arguing that if Jesus, whom disciples follow, reveals not only God's glory but also God's beauty, then, this raises the possibility of thinking about a discipleship of beauty. It will do this by reflecting on the portrait of Johannine discipleship. Using the lens of virtue ethics, it will reflect on three modalities of Johannine discipleship: "abiding," "loving," and "glorifying." Jesus himself lived out these modalities in his life and ministry by practicing the virtues of "dynamic hospitality," "selfless loving," and "fruitful obedience." These are Johannine virtues for Christian discipleship. They are rooted in Jesus' own "ethical" disposition towards God and neighbor. This disposition has the form of "response-able" loving that Jesus exercised in his relationship with God, especially on the Cross where the glory of God is revealed as God's saving love for humankind. God's glory, moreover, is the splendor of God's beauty, and Jesus is its form. If this is who Jesus is, then, following him in discipleship must be about participating in God's beauty, this chapter argues.

Chapter 2 will develop this possibility of a discipleship of beauty by drawing on

Balthasar's theology. It describes three elements for such a discipleship. First, how disciples can perceive God's beauty in Jesus. Second, what they can proclaim God's beauty to be as Jesus reveals it, especially on the Cross and in the Resurrection. Third, how taking on Jesus' way of loving and serving God and neighbor to the end empowers disciples to manifest God's beauty in the world. Balthasar's understanding of Jesus as the form of God's beauty is especially helpful for this reflection. He shows that Jesus is not only the revealer of God's beauty; he is also its revelation. The beauty of God Jesus reveals is the triune God's saving and transforming love. This love is distinguished by mutual self-giving and receiving love that is exchanged between Christ, the Son, and God, the Father, in the Spirit. This love manifests the *kenotic* reality of the trinitarian communion that God is and how God acts. This is what disciples can proclaim God's beauty to be in Jesus. As the form of God's beauty, Jesus' way of living and serving God and neighbor is eucharistic. He participates in God's beauty through kenotic self-giving. This involves self-offering and praise on Jesus' part on the Cross; on God's part, it involves accepting and transforming Jesus in his resurrection. As the risen Lord, Jesus realizes the fullness of who he is; he is the eschatological realization of God's beauty. Thus, Jesus in his eucharistic and eschatological form as God's beauty must inform Christian discipleship: he is its practice and its promised hope. With Balthasar, we build on Johannine discipleship to better envision the form a discipleship of beauty can have.

Chapter 3 will describe how a disciple can concretely practice the discipleship of beauty that Chapter 2 envisions and that Chapter 1 suggests as a possible way to rethink Christian discipleship. It will draw on Paul's spirituality of God's cruciform love to demonstrate how disciples can accomplish this. For Paul, this spirituality is rooted in God's cruciform love: this is God's way of loving that is conformed to the Christ-like way of self-

giving on the Cross, as Jesus' way of loving is also conformed to God on the Cross. He expresses well what God's cruciform love is about in his teaching on God's righteousness: this is God's love that reconciles and saves all peoples for communion, and that the faithfulness of Jesus on the Cross reveals. This event of reconciliation manifests God's beauty because the various divisions caused by sin are transformed into the communion or covenant relationship humankind once again shares with God and with one another in the Body of Christ. This Pauline spirituality is appropriate for practicing a discipleship of beauty because it is rooted in and animated by the spirituality of self-giving love that Jesus lived to manifest God's beauty in and for the community, especially, on the Cross. His spirituality is cruciform; and this is the same spirituality that those who follow Jesus can imbibe to manifest God's beauty. For this study, Paul's spirituality of God's cruciform love therefore sets forth the dynamism for a discipleship of beauty, as it also provides a blueprint for disciples to enmesh it in community. The focus and hope of this chapter is to describe how living out this spirituality empowers disciples to proclaim God's beauty as the experience of *koinōnia* they can bring about by overcoming their differences and sharing their charisms to build up the common good. This experience recalls the covenant experience of reconciliation God accomplishes through Jesus' salvific action. The task of a discipleship of beauty is therefore Christ-like: it is to bring about reconciliation, solidarity, and communion in the world. This is how disciples can manifest the beauty of God to be God's love that saves, transforms and reconciles humankind to God in an everlasting communion. This chapter also explains how disciples are transformed when they live out a spirituality of cruciform love; they become more like Christ in embodying God's beauty. This is the beauty of how this discipleship can inform and give

form to a disciple's way of living and serving when he follows Jesus as the form of God's beauty.

To conclude, this thesis will summarize how it has responded to the possibility of a discipleship of beauty by envisioning what constitutes this kind of a discipleship, and how it can be practiced in community. It will also propose some possible ways this initial reflection on a discipleship of beauty can be further developed in theological studies.

Chapter 1: Rethinking Discipleship with John's Gospel

Discipleship is commonly understood as following Jesus and becoming his instruments for the inbreaking of God's Reign. This involves proclaiming the truth about God and enacting God's goodness in the world. It is also about obeying the Church's teachings to live moral Christian lives. These ways of being a disciple help believers to know who God is, who they are to God, and how they are to follow Jesus. A Johannine shorthand for discipleship is following Jesus, "the way, the truth and the life" (14.6).

Discipleship, however, is not often thought about in terms of God's beauty. This is a lacuna in theological reflection about it, especially since Jesus reveals God to be not only true and good but also beautiful. Andrei Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity offers a possible insight into God's beauty and its importance for discipleship. The Three Divine Persons who are One God sit around a table feasting and celebrating. Their communion is what reveals God to be beautiful: God is unity-in-diversity.¹⁴ A pray-er contemplating Rublev's icon becomes aware, moreover, that the Divine Persons are inviting him to enter their open-ended circle. This is an invitation to communion with God; it recalls God's salvific promise to disciples who follow Jesus, and who live and serve in the Spirit.

In John, communion is the template for disciples to live out their belief in Jesus. Several biblical scholars affirm this. For J.A du Rand, communion has the form of friendship; this is the distinguishing characteristic of Johannine discipleship.¹⁵ Raymond Collins's study of the symbolic significance of the verbs "follow," "see," "seek," and "stay"

¹⁴ For Pavel N. Evokimov, an icon reveals God because it is "a place of theophany." See Bruno Forte's discussion of Evokimov's theology of aesthetics in *The Portal of Beauty: Towards a Theology of Aesthetics*, trans. David Glenday and Paul McPartlan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 76.

¹⁵ Rekha M. Chennattu discusses J.A Rand's insight in *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 12-13.

in John suggests that discipleship is best appreciated as being in dialogue or communion with Jesus.¹⁶ And Andreas J. Köstenberger's study of the three movements of discipleship in John—coming to Jesus, following Jesus, and being sent by Jesus—leads him to focus on communion.¹⁷ Together, they support Raymond E. Brown's observation that "discipleship is the primary category in John."¹⁸

This chapter reflects on discipleship by focusing on the communion disciples have with Jesus as they follow him to encounter God in John's Gospel. This will help to consider how their experience raises the possibility to rethink what discipleship is. This chapter is able to embrace this challenge because the narrative form of John's Gospel allows its readers to enter into its revelatory dynamic. Through the signs he performs and his "being lifted up" on the Cross, Jesus reveals not only who God is but also who he is. Those who encounter Jesus in the gospels face a choice: either believe in him and have life, or reject him and remain in darkness. According to Nicolas Farelly, John's readers are led in the same way "to make a judgment of their own" about who Jesus is for their lives and what it means to follow him.¹⁹ Such an engagement will allow asking what following Jesus can mean.

This chapter explores this possibility in four parts. First, it describes the Johannine portrait of discipleship in terms of "abiding," "loving," and "glorifying." These are modalities for Christian life. "Modality" expresses the manner of living out one's faith as Jesus taught and modeled for his disciples in John's Gospel. Second, it reads each of these modalities through the lens of virtue ethics. The aim is to show how practicing the Johannine

¹⁶ Chennattu discusses Collins's study in *Johannine Discipleship*, 12.

¹⁷ Chennattu discusses A.J. Kostenberger's study in *Johannine Discipleship*, 16-17.

¹⁸ Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979) 84.

¹⁹ Nicolas Farelly discusses the importance of narrative analysis in John's Gospel in the Introduction to his *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel: A Narrative Analysis of their Faith and Understanding* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1-13.

virtues of “dynamic hospitality,” “selfless loving,” and “fruitful obedience” can empower a disciple to live out these modalities. This involves reflecting on Jesus who himself practices them as he lives out his faith in God in his life and ministry. He thus models for disciples how they can practice these virtues with faith in God and through service to others. Third, I demonstrate that these virtues flow from Jesus’ own “ethical” disposition towards God and neighbor. His disposition has the form of “response-able” loving. Jesus reveals this fully on the Cross; here, his response-able loving as man faithfully responds to the divine love of God he first received as God’s Word sent into the world. In the Resurrection, God’s faithful love responds to the depth of Jesus’ response-able love by raising him from the dead. Jesus on the Cross and in the Resurrection reveals God’s glory, which shines through as the fullness of God’s love. Fourth, I conclude by proposing that the glory of God is better understood as the splendor of God’s beauty. The disciples in John’s Gospel witness this through, in, and with Jesus, who is not only the revealer of God’s glory but also its very revelation. If this is who Jesus is, then following him in discipleship must be about participating in God’s beauty. This raises the possibility to rethink Christian discipleship.

Modalities of Johannine discipleship

Johannine discipleship entails living out one’s belief in Jesus so as to enjoy the fullness of life God offers in his name (20.31). Craig R. Koester explains: “The call to faith is a call to a way of life,” and “this path is shaped by the encounter with Jesus.”²⁰ The Johannine narrative presents this portrait of discipleship through three modalities to live the

²⁰ Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 187.

Christian faith: abiding in Jesus, loving others as Jesus did, and, through these ways, glorifying God like Jesus.

A reader encounters these modalities early on in the opening chapter of John's Gospel.²¹ John 1.35-42 is about Jesus calling his first disciples. John presents this event in three stages: the disciples are directed to Jesus; they encounter, follow, and stay with Jesus; and then Andrew, one of them, witnesses to Simon about Jesus.

John the Baptist directs his disciples to Jesus. He does this with the revelatory proclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God" (ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, 1.36). This builds on his previous attestations of Jesus' identity. On the first day, he indicated to the Jerusalem delegation that not he but Jesus is the Messiah (1.19-28). On the second day, he proclaimed Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and as the Son of God as revealed in Jesus' baptism (1.29-34). On this third day, the disciples hear again the Baptist's declaration that Jesus is the Lamb of God. I agree with Koester that hearing engenders genuine faith. Hearing about Jesus opens one to the possibility of believing in him; this faith in turn enables him to see Jesus in the signs he encounters.²² But it is equally significant that John uses the word "behold" (εἶδω) to show how the Baptist directs his disciples to Jesus; he turns his disciples' gaze onto Jesus. This emphasizes the role of *seeing* in discipleship. The use of εἶδω is even more significant because it directs his readers to look ahead to Jesus on the Cross where he is the Paschal Lamb who reveals the glory of God's saving love (19.16-37).

Hearing the Baptist's witness, and turning their gaze toward Jesus, the disciples promptly follow him. The verb to follow is ἀκολουθεῖω. It has two meanings: literally, to walk behind someone or in the same direction, and, metaphorically, to commit oneself to whom

²¹ Chennattu provides an insightful exegesis of this pericope in *Johannine Discipleship*, 24-41.

²² Craig R. Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John," *Biblica* 3 (1989): 347.

one follows. Both are developed in this pericope: the disciples walk behind Jesus to where he stays, and they remain with him (1.39). Together, these suggest that following Jesus is about living in and imitating Jesus' way. I wish to propose this description of "following Jesus" for this study in discipleship. Living in Jesus' way is, moreover, the invitation and promise he makes when he responds to the disciples' question about his abode: ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε (1.38-39). Jesus invites them into communion with him. What he promises they will see in and through this communion is the revelation of his real identity as God's Word and the eternal life that believing in him assures. More fundamentally, what they come to see is where Jesus truly abides: in the Father's love (15.10); and the Father, in turn, also dwells in him (14.10).²³ "To come" (ἔρχομαι) is "an invitation to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus," and "to see" (ὀράω) is "to be open to the ongoing revelation of God in Jesus."²⁴ Encountering Jesus leads the disciples to following and staying with Jesus. They are able to do this because their meeting is an event of seeing; it confirms their faith that hearing about Jesus from the Baptist had engendered.²⁵

Jesus's invitation to stay provides the first insight into Johannine discipleship: abiding in Jesus. The Greek word "μένω" best expresses the communion Jesus invites the disciples into. It is used twice in this pericope. First, when the disciples ask Jesus, "Where do you stay?" (ποῦ μένεις, 1.38). Second, when John records that the disciples stayed (ἔμειναν) with Jesus after following him and seeing where he lived (1.39). Here the verb "stayed" carries the theological sense of "abiding" or "indwelling." "To abide," then, means to be one with Jesus and in his Spirit. This is what Jesus calls his disciples to. A reader observes this in Jesus'

²³ Thomas D. Stegman discusses this foundational aspect of the Father-Son relationship in "New Testament Portraits of Faith (4): Gospel of John," *The Pastoral Review* 9/5 (2013): 16.

²⁴ Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 31. Emphasis is in the original.

²⁵ Koester discusses this idea in greater detail in "Hearing, Seeing and Believing," 327-348.

discussion with the Jewish leaders about his identity and origin in Chapter 8. In 8.30, many of the Jews who heard about Jesus believed him. Then, in 8.31, Jesus describes who a true disciple is: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples.” A true disciple abides in Jesus; he lets Jesus’ Spirit dwell within him. Following Jesus and becoming his disciple is ultimately not about believing in the signs he performs but in him. For John, being in communion with Jesus is what matters in discipleship. It recalls the first time μένω is used in John; it identifies who Jesus is in communion with. “The abiding of the Spirit in Jesus is the sign of his identity as the incarnate Word of God (1.14), the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1.33), the one who is in communication with God and in relationship with God.”²⁶ Similarly, abiding in Jesus gives the disciple his Christian identity. John presents this in the metaphor of the vine and branches: abiding in Jesus empowers his disciples to bear much fruit, and this proves that they are his own (15.7-8). In addition, abiding in Jesus promises them a share in God’s life; this is the communion they can have with God, in and through Jesus. John presents this in the Bread of Life discourse: Jesus’ self-revelatory statement that he is the bread of life for the disciples assures them that they can abide in him and live forever with God (6.58).²⁷ Finally, “to abide” intimates perseverance, and this suggests that the disciple who remains faithful to Jesus is the one who perseveres in his Word.

Abiding in Jesus is also transformative. The reader observes this in Andrew in two ways. Andrew’s very first action after meeting Jesus is to find Simon, to whom he proclaims, “We have found the Messiah” (1.41). The Greek word εὑρίσκει (to find) suggests effort and activity. Andrew’s second action is the missionary act of bringing Simon to Jesus. Andrew’s two-fold action is apostolic; he is a disciple on mission. Meeting, accepting, and abiding in

²⁶ Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 112.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

Jesus transforms Andrew. This is the transformative aspect of discipleship. It is life-giving: Andrew's identity is tied to the revelation of Jesus who comes to give life to the full (10.10). John suggests this by now naming Andrew (1.40) who was previously unnamed. It is also life-changing: Jesus affirms who Simon is ("You are Simon son of John"), but he also promises him a new future by giving him a new name, Peter ("You shall be called Cephas").

Andrew's testimony to Simon about Jesus provides the second insight into discipleship: it is about loving others, in order to save them and to give them life. This is how Jesus lived and loved (10.10-11). Disciples learn to love like Jesus by being in communion with him. The reader witnesses this in Andrew's reaching out to Simon and drawing him into communion with Jesus. Andrew's action echoes Jesus, who had earlier called Andrew and the other disciple into communion with himself. Andrew's action presupposes knowledge of who Jesus is. Though the pericope does not explain what this is, the Prologue and the Baptist's revelatory proclamation give us a glimpse of what this might be. With God, Jesus is the Word that gives life (John 1.3-4). This is not just human life but the absolute fullness of life (ζωή). This is the life only God can give, which God does through Jesus. As the Lamb of God, Jesus takes away the sin of the world (αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, 1.29). This action saves and gives life. The Greek word αἴρων suggests this. The verb means both "to take away" and also "to raise up." Jesus saves one from sin in order to raise him into new life. Giving and saving life are borne out of love for another. This is who God is and what God does in Jesus. The disciples will progressively come to know this truth about God and Jesus as John's Gospel unfolds, culminating with the Cross where Jesus reveals the fullness of this truth. In 1.35-42, God's offer of new life can be seen in how Andrew is moved by his relationship with Jesus to give new life to Simon by inviting him into Jesus' friendship. Andrew's action demonstrates

how discipleship must be about loving others, like God does in Jesus, in order that they can live life to the full. Indeed, Jesus will teach in the Farewell Discourse that one's communion with him cannot be self-serving; it must be directed outwards in observable Christ-like saving love for others: "It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples" (14.35).

Andrew's testimony about Jesus also provides a third insight into Johannine discipleship: it is about glorifying God. Andrew's witness enables Simon to see Jesus as the Messiah. Testifying about Jesus after seeing him and orientating another's gaze onto Jesus are about the revelation of Jesus as God's glory (δόξα). This is how the Prologue describes who Jesus is: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of truth and grace" (1.14). This is who Andrew witnesses to, even if the fullness of Jesus' revelation will be in the Cross. With Andrew, the reader begins to appreciate that it is not enough for a disciple to follow, to abide in, and to love according to Jesus' way of living. Discipleship ultimately involves testifying to God's glory in and to the world. Jesus is the form of God's glory that the disciples could see and could testify to: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (1.18). The Greek word for "made known" in this line is ἐξηγήσατο. It is better appreciated as "explained." As God's Word, Jesus is the utterance and explanation of who God is and what God does. The disciples see this in the signs he performs as the Johannine narrative unfolds. "The signs that show God's glory reveal his power and presence. The signs also help to show people who God is."²⁸ Andrew's testimony about Jesus is the fruit of his communion with Jesus. John will develop this theme of bearing fruit in the discourse on the vine and branches: "It is to the glory of God my Father that you should bear

²⁸ Koester, *The Word of Life*, 35.

much fruit and be my disciples” (15.8). As Chennattu observes, there is “no other way to prove themselves to be and to become (γενήσεσθε) disciples of Jesus except by bearing much fruit.”²⁹ They bear fruit when they attest to God’s presence to others, like Jesus did; and like Jesus, their actions glorify God to others.

John 1.35-42 narrates the event of Jesus calling his first disciples. It also identifies for disciples the modalities to live the Christian faith. John develops these as the Johannine narrative develops. In Jesus’ encounters with the Samaritan woman (Ch. 4) and the man born blind (Ch. 9), readers can further appreciate what abiding in Jesus entails. In Jesus’ healing the sick (Ch. 5) and feeding the hungry (Ch. 6), they can deepen their knowledge of how to love like Jesus does. And in Jesus’ death and resurrection (Chs. 18-20), they can better understand the purpose of glorifying God. Hence, disciples learn about, imbibe, and express these modalities through their communion with Jesus, who embodies love for God faithfully and love for others selflessly. John illustrates this in Jesus’ teaching on footwashing (Ch. 13). By living these modalities over time, disciples grow into Christ-like resemblance. For Michael H. Crosby, this “involves an embrace of Jesus and his proclamation directly or through others. Acceptance is impossible without acting on his message.”³⁰ Johannine discipleship is therefore about forming disciples to be Christ-like.³¹

²⁹ Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 115.

³⁰ Michael H. Crosby, “Do You Love Me?”: *Jesus Questions the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 105.

³¹ Michael Labahn, “‘It’s Only Love’—Is that All? Limits and Potential of Johannine ‘Ethic’—A Critical Evaluation of Research,” in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: “Implicit Ethics” in the Johannine Writings*, ed. J.G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 35.

Johannine discipleship through the lens of virtue ethics

But how does one live these modalities for life in Christ-like ways? I propose to answer this question through the lens of virtue ethics. I will demonstrate how each of these modalities are in fact rooted in and informed by a corresponding virtue the Johannine Jesus practiced; this one-for-one correlation suggests how these virtues are appropriate for practicing Christ-like discipleship.

Why virtue ethics? This approach, though focused on the ethical life, pays attention to the relationship between a disciple and Jesus. Virtue ethics focuses on strengthening the coherence between a person's inner life of virtues and his exterior life of ethical action. It involves an honest self-examination in order to ask what a person is; it then proposes practices for him to realize his *telos*. These practices are based on an exemplar whose life and ethics are virtues-based. For Christians, Jesus is the exemplar of virtue ethics for the community.³²

This approach contrasts with how ethics is usually understood: as the right and wrong ways a person behaves. The latter presupposes a set of instructions or a list of “dos” and “don’ts” that shape a person morally. They guide one’s decisions and judgment on ethical actions. Moral codes and teachings express such an ethics. In the Old Testament, especially in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, this takes the form of prescriptions for Israel to maintain and nurture their covenant relationship with God. The Israelites were to obey the Mosaic laws in order to realize themselves as God’s Holy People. The Synoptic Gospels also present an ethic. It is founded on Jesus’ teachings. These include his Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), his great commandment to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s

³² Allen Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 28.

neighbor as oneself (Mark 12.30-31), and even his teaching to love one's enemies by turning one's cheek (Luke 6.9). Jesus' selfless love of God and self-giving service to all, especially, the less and forgotten, embody this new ethic: one loves God by loving one's neighbor. Christians are to follow these ethical teachings obediently. Doing this brings about salvation, as the Matthean Last Judgment teaches (Matt 25.31-46). These biblical writings in the Old and New Testaments present ethics in terms of obligations and consequences.³³

The Johannine approach to ethics, on the other hand, focuses on the person of Jesus.³⁴ One comes to know how to live and serve as a Christian disciple by understanding the biographical narrative of Jesus' life of virtue.³⁵ In particular, it is founded on his experience of encountering Jesus who calls people into an ever-deepening intimacy with him. John 1.35-42 illustrates this. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus increasingly solicits from his disciples their selfless response to continue following him; this involves living, loving, and serving more and more like him, especially when interacting with others.³⁶

Simon Peter exemplifies this maturation in Christ-like discipleship. Peter begins his discipleship passively; he is found by Andrew, and brought by him to Jesus whom he follows (1.40-42). Farelly rightly points out that Peter remains silent throughout this encounter; hence, "almost nothing can be said about Peter's faith."³⁷ Peter's understanding of Jesus

³³ William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 31.

³⁴ For Wayne Meeks this Johannine approach to virtue ethics for discipleship can be problematic. He raises two concerns. First, the highly Christological presentation of Jesus in John's Gospel makes it difficult for disciples to relate to and to imitate Jesus. He is presented to be more divine than human; imitating him seems impossible. Second, John's Gospel has no clearly enunciated ethical program, moral code, or systematic teaching on ethics. Readers find it difficult to draw from it to live the moral life. They have to discern an ethics from the narrative world of Jesus' life and ministry, and this is open to misinterpretation. See "The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist," in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, ed. R.A Culpepper and C.C. Black. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 317-326.

³⁵ Robert Burridge makes this point in *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 334.

³⁶ Farelly makes a similar observation in *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 27-28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

develops as he follows him. This leads to his confession of faith at end of the Bread of Life discourse: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, we believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (6.68-69). Yet, he is still unable to grasp that Jesus’ words of life “may also require death” or self-sacrifice.³⁸ Peter protesting Jesus for washing his feet (13.6-11) and attacking the servant at Jesus’ arrest exemplify this. Though Peter’s denial of Jesus marks the lowest point in his discipleship (18.15-18, 25-27), he still runs to the tomb and witnesses to the Resurrection (20.2-10). His actions express perseverance in faith. Peter lives out this faith more fully at the Lake of Tiberias; he returns to the risen Jesus with his three-fold confession of faith that is his selfless response to Jesus’ command to tend his sheep (21.15-19). This is Peter’s more mature understanding of his discipleship; it will demand his total self-giving to continue Jesus’ mission and it will lead to his martyrdom as Jesus predicts. Peter’s end is the ultimate expression of being a witness of God, but it is realized only by living discipleship to its fullest, that is, by being like Christ. Peter’s maturation as a disciple, then, illustrates how following Jesus is about the formation of the whole person to be Christ-like.³⁹

A Johannine approach to ethics demonstrates how this maturation as a disciple is enabled by following Jesus as the moral paradigm of discipleship.⁴⁰ This chapter illustrates this by focusing on three virtues Jesus practiced to live a virtuous life that he also passed on to his disciples. I agree with Koester that John presents these virtues in the form of “word pictures”; these are what the disciples hear and see in Jesus’ commandments and example.

³⁸ Ibid., 92.

³⁹ Michael Labahn discusses how the focus in Johannine ethics is about forming the person in Christ’s image and likeness. See his article, “‘It’s Only Love’—Is That All? Limits and Potential of Johannine ‘Ethic’—A Critical Evaluation of Research,” 3-43.

⁴⁰ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 75.

These qualities enable them to envision how they can live virtuously like him.⁴¹ These “word pictures” also invite readers to reflect on their own relationship with God, Jesus, and other people, and to consider the quality of their discipleship.⁴²

Dynamic Hospitality

This virtue enables a disciple to live out the modality of abiding in Jesus, and through him, of abiding in intimacy with God and neighbor. It enables him to be faithful and present to Jesus, and with him, to God and others. “Dynamic hospitality” is, therefore, about receiving another into one’s life, and to then be in good company with him. This involves welcoming another, as well as permitting oneself to be welcomed by this other, which is often hard to do and calls for a dying to oneself.

For John, Jesus lived and expressed dynamic hospitality in the familial intimacy he shared with God: “The Father and I are one” (ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἓν ἐσμεν, 10.30). This intimacy takes the form of communion. Throughout John’s Gospel, Jesus speaks of his communion with God. To Philip who asks him to show the Father, Jesus answers, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (14.11). To the Pharisees who criticized him for healing the sick man at Bethesda on a Sabbath, Jesus reveals the source of his healing: “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself” (5.26). And to the disciples he gathers and cares for, he prays that they will remain united in him, as he and the Father are (17. 10). To this end, Jesus asks the Father to give them the Spirit to keep them in communion with one another, and with him, and the Father (14.16). The Prologue anticipates this reality of the Father-Son communion: ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (John 1.1).

⁴¹ Koester, *The Word of Life*, 188.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 188.

The “word picture” John provides to describe the communion Jesus and God share is dynamic hospitality. John illustrates this in the Prologue: Jesus is turned to God, and so receives and welcomes God (ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, 1.1), and it is in God that he rests and matures (ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, 1.18). Jesus practices this virtue of hospitality in his baptism (1.29-34): Jesus receives the Spirit descending upon him from God. This Spirit affirms God’s love for him, as it also animates his mission. As the Gospel unfolds, Jesus lives out this love of God selflessly in his life and ministry, and most fully on the Cross where he returns the Father’s love. His actions of reaching out to others, like the man born blind (9), and making room to welcome them into the communion he already shares with God, are also acts of hospitality. Thus, Jesus shows that hospitality for God must always involve hospitality for others. This then is how Jesus practiced dynamic hospitality; by abiding in God to abide with others. Hence, Jesus’ call to his disciples to imitate him: “Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me” (13.20). This is how a disciple comes to abide in Jesus, as Jesus abides in them.⁴³ He teaches his disciples about the significance of practicing dynamic hospitality in the Farewell Discourse in the Johannine narrative. Drawing upon the communion he shares with God, he instructs them on the value of this virtue for mutual abiding. First, he presents the value of entering into communion; it is to mutually share everything: “All I have is yours and all you have is mine” (17.10). Thus, the communion Jesus and God share is also their commonwealth. Second, he shows that their mutual sharing is only meaningful when it is shared with others in turn: “Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: all he reveals to you will be taken from what is mine” (16.15). What Jesus

⁴³ Dorothy A. Lee describes abiding in Jesus in terms of coming home to rest in the fold of Jesus’ love and of progressively entering into Jesus’ inner life with God. See *Hallowed in Truth and Love: Spirituality in Johannine Literature* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 148.

and God share intimately is always directed outwards to bring others into the intimacy of their relationship; their communion is for mission. Third, he points out that their openness to share their communion with all witnesses to the gratuitous love of God for humankind, as well as to the very nature of God—God is love, mutually shared between Father and Son, in the Spirit, but also selflessly shared with all. “May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me” (17.21). These three ways in which Jesus and God share communion promise disciples an intimate relationship with God in Jesus when they practice dynamic hospitality.

Dynamic hospitality is an essential virtue for discipleship because it empowers a disciple to be other-directed. Practicing this helps him to become more like Christ; he can thus realize the fullness of his personhood.⁴⁴ Practicing this virtue also enables a disciple to participate in the life of God through his relationship with Jesus. Finally, he learns how Jesus’ relationship with God is the wellspring for Jesus’ life and ministry; this teaches him how his own relationship with Jesus must do the same. The Samaritan woman’s encounter with Jesus is an example of practicing dynamic hospitality (4.7-39). She welcomes and receives Jesus as God’s gift of new life. She then participates in it by proclaiming him as the Messiah to other Samaritans. Her actions transform her into Jesus’ disciple.

Selfless loving

This virtue enables a disciple to live out the modality of loving others like Jesus did by living with and serving another. It is distinguished by selflessness; it involves reaching out to another, putting him before oneself, and striving to help him live life more fully. Even though “selfless loving” flows out naturally from one’s relationship of abiding with another, it is

⁴⁴ Lee, *Hallowed in Truth and Love*, 38.

different from dynamic hospitality. Practicing dynamic hospitality invites disciples to focus on receiving and welcoming another to be in relationship with him. Selfless loving, on the other hand, orientates them outwards to reach out and to minister to those in need, and in these ways, help them to live life fully. Practicing this virtue, then, empowers disciples to better en flesh the love of God in and for the community. This makes Jesus' commandment to love one another (13.34a) real and alive.

Jesus practices this virtue when he performs the various "signs" in John's Gospel. These include changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana (2.1-12), healing the man born blind (9:1-7), and feeding the hungry in abundance (6.1-15). These show how Jesus serves those in need: "I have come so that they might have life and have it to the full" (10.10). Life to the full in Johannine terms is communion with God. The gift of life is the hermeneutic key to understand the God Jesus communicates: God exists to give life.

The "word picture" John provides to image Jesus practicing selfless loving is footwashing. In John 13.1-20, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. His action expresses the utterly humble and self-sacrificing action of caring for another. This is the image of Christ-like service. More importantly, this virtue directs one towards caring for another by enlivening relationships and building up the community.⁴⁵ Because one comes to know God by knowing Jesus (14.7), Jesus' footwashing reveals the self-giving and gratuitous love of God for humankind's wellbeing. Jesus' actions of loving service are therefore rooted in the more primordial love of God that gives life. This is the love Jesus calls his disciples to imitate when he finishes washing his disciples' feet: "So, if I your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example (ὑπόδειγμα), that you also should do as I have done to you" (13.14-15). What Jesus is calling

⁴⁵ Ibid., 153.

his disciples to do is best described by the Greek word ὑπόδειγμα, a term that suggests a pattern or model of behavior for imitation. The disciples are to imitate Jesus' selfless loving that his footwashing witnesses to. This is a new orientation to love; it is to love another not for personal gain or affective affirmation, but for the other's wellbeing and inclusion into the "circle of love" that the disciples already share with Jesus by abiding in him.⁴⁶ This involves sacrificing oneself for another, and it enables one to live, love and serve selflessly.

Jesus also calls his disciples to practice this virtue because it saves and transforms. First, it heals and uplifts those being served and ministered to. Second, it helps disciples to break away from sin by turning away from self, and to live in God's ways that perfect him in God's likeness (1 John 2.3-11, 4.12). More significantly, disciples realize their Christian identity by practicing this virtue: "It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples" (14.35). However, this requires they practice this virtue with humility and self-sacrifice; these are necessary to keep them open to God's Spirit that will teach them to love selflessly like Jesus. For Robert Burrige, John's presentation of Jesus practicing selfless loving towards others poses an "ethical challenge" to his readers; they are to imitate Jesus' self-sacrificial example of divine love.⁴⁷ A disciple who embraces this challenge and practices selfless loving towards others enters more deeply into the heart of discipleship. Here he experiences who he is to Jesus: he is Jesus' friend. Richard Hays sees in this intimate relationship that is for service the "determinate for the community's ethical norms."⁴⁸ It is out of this relationship that disciples can bring about Christ-like solidarity and communion among people, especially those in need.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 153.

⁴⁷ Burrige, *Imitating Jesus*, 307.

⁴⁸ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to the New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper, 1996), 143.

Fruitful obedience

This virtue empowers disciples to live out the modality of glorifying God in their Christian lives. Jesus calls them to practice this: “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples” (15.8). “Fruitful obedience” is how they can witness more fully to God’s glory, which is God’s saving love that gives life to the full. It is a virtue that empowers one to take on the life-stance of obedient faithfulness to God and to accomplishing God’s will fruitfully.

Jesus himself practiced this virtue to glorify God. He did this by accomplishing God’s will. This is how he understands his mission: “I have come to do my Father’s will” (6.38). In John, Jesus teaches that God’s will is eternal salvation: “Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me, but that I should raise it up on the last day” (6.39). Jesus fulfilled his Father’s will obediently throughout his life, but most fully and humbly on the Cross. His obedience enabled the glory of God’s saving love to shine through evil, sin and death. This is how Jesus’ obedience bears fruit: it reveals God as the faithful Father who creates to save all peoples.

John’s presentation of Jesus’ saving action and the glory of God it proclaims cannot be separated from his obedience. His self-sacrificing action on the Cross illuminates how we are to better appreciate obedience. Obedience, as Jesus exemplified, is not about the loss of freedom or freewill. Rather, it is freedom for relationship: Jesus exercises his freedom in order to relate to God in a way that allows him to do God’s will. His exercise of freedom also enables him to realize the fullness of his identity as God’s Son on the Cross and in the Resurrection. It is important to note that Jesus’ obedient submission to God involves listening

to God, knowing God's will and choosing to do it in freedom (10.15). This is why Jesus can say that he alone can lay down this life in obedience to his Father's command (10.18).

The "word picture" John provides to envision Jesus practicing "fruitful obedience" is the metaphor of the vine and the branches (15). It expresses organic unity, that is, its symbiotic relationship suggests communion. Communion with God is what enables Jesus to glorify God in John's Gospel. His communion is rooted in obedience: he has kept God's commandments and abides in God's love (15.9-10). This allows him to speak God's words and to make known everything he has heard from God to the disciples (11, 15). The fullness of his proclamation of God is the Cross. This is how Jesus glorifies God.

Jesus calls his disciples to also glorify God by their lives. They can do this, he teaches, by abiding in him and keeping his commandments: "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples" (15.8). What Jesus calls them to is the practice of fruitful obedience. That Jesus is the vine and they are its branches suggest that "the mutual indwelling of Jesus and his disciples" empowers the latter to glorify God.⁴⁹ In other words, following Jesus is about living obediently like Jesus to glorify God. Hence, this virtue is more than doing what is right rather than wrong, or abnegating one's freedom for another. Rather, obedience expresses one's true faith in Jesus because one sees and hears him and, more importantly, follows him, even to the Cross, to glorify God.⁵⁰ And this must be, according to Hays, the community's preeminent responsibility in proclaiming the truth about Jesus so that all may believe and have life in his name, which is what Christian discipleship is really about.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 114.

⁵⁰ Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 41.

⁵¹ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 144.

Disciples therefore have a model in Jesus's practice of fruitful obedience to glorify God. By practicing this virtue in their lives, disciples build on their practice of dynamic hospitality and selfless loving to live their Christian life, even if this means following him obediently and in total self-giving to the Cross.⁵² It must be so because what "Christ reveals in his absolute obedience to the Father is not just something about what all human beings should offer to the Father; it is at the same time a revelation that love, even in God, has the nature of sacrifice."⁵³ Glorifying God is the right and just response by disciples to God's self-sacrificing love. And fruitful obedience is the Christ-like manner to do this.

Jesus' "response-able" loving and the glory of the Lord

"Dynamic hospitality," "selfless loving," and "fruitful obedience" are three virtues Jesus practiced to live the virtuous life in relation to God and neighbor. These virtues are necessary to live out the modalities of "abiding," "loving," and "glorifying" in Christian discipleship. Disciples know how to practice these virtues by looking at the person of Jesus, in particular, at how his interior disposition enables him to practice these virtues.

What is this interior disposition that orientates and guides how Jesus lives virtuously in relation to God and neighbor? How is it ethical? It is necessary to ask these questions because a disciple follows Jesus, and by contemplating how Jesus lives his life, he can reflect on his own life and how virtuously he is living it out. Appreciating Jesus' interior disposition can then help him nurture his own interior disposition to be Christ-like in life and ministry. This also has to do with the hope of Christian discipleship: maturation into the likeness of

⁵² Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 41.

⁵³ Rodney A. Howsare, *Balthasar: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 139.

God's image in which one is created, and whose likeness is fully manifested by following the way of Jesus.

“Response-able” loving is the answer to the question. It is an ethical disposition of faithfulness to relationship. Response-able loving is at the heart of how Jesus relates to God. He faithfully abides in God; he selflessly loves others for God; and he prophetically glorifies God to draw people into communion with God: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe you have sent me” (17.21).

The new commandment that Jesus gives his disciples in the Farewell Discourse is the Johannine text that best expresses what response-able loving is about: “love one another, just as I have loved you” (ἀγαπάτε ἀλλήλους· καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς, 13.34). To understand this, one needs “to look into both the act of giving a commandment and the newness of this new commandment.”⁵⁴ In the Old Testament, God gives commandments to bring Israel into covenant relationship. Commandments were given for Israel to have a healthy communion with God as God's chosen people. Though Jesus claims to give a new commandment to love, it does not reject its Old Testament roots; Jesus' commandment to his disciples continues God's invitation to be in covenant relationship with them. Its newness, however, is expressed in three ways, according to Chennattu. First, “to love one another” highlights the aspect of reciprocity; it is about giving and receiving love. This emphasizes “the mutuality of a relationship; it is not only loving the other but also being loved by the other.”⁵⁵ Second, “as I have loved you” insists that the model for loving is Jesus. The disciples are to love “after Jesus' love” and to ground their loving in his love for them.⁵⁶ More significantly, this recalls that Jesus' own model for loving is God's love: “as the Father has loved me, so have I loved

⁵⁴ Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship*, 98.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

you” (15.9). Third, Jesus’ way of loving is loving another faithfully to the “end” (εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς, 13.1), as revealed most dramatically in his total self-giving on the Cross. This is his way of response-ably loving God and neighbor. This is what Jesus means when he tells his disciples after the footwashing to do as he does (13.15). Together, these three ways illustrate how Jesus’ new commandment “rests on a new reality: the new imperative is based on a new indicative, the love of God in Christ and the love of Christ in his own.”⁵⁷ Hence, to live this new commandment of response-able loving is not only to imitate Jesus but to also distinguish one’s life by Christ-like love.⁵⁸

A disciple therefore learns that Jesus’ new command must lead to the Cross because this is where Jesus lives out the fullness of response-able loving: he loves God and others to the end (εἰς τέλος). Though he undergoes suffering and death, he still response-ably loves God by practicing the virtuous life even on the Cross: he perseveres in faithful abiding; he continues to selflessly love God and neighbor; and he obediently fulfills his mission from God. In turn, Jesus’ faithfulness to do God’s will on Cross moves God to raise him from the dead in faithful loving to fullness of life. What is played out on the Cross is the fidelity of relationship: “The Father and I are one” (10.30).

A disciple thus learns that Jesus’ new command must also and ultimately lead to the glorification of God. Jesus’ response-able loving on the Cross reveals the glory of God. This is the hour of glory in John’s Gospel: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you” (17.1). The Greek word for “glorify” is δοξάζω, which carries the richer meaning of “to praise.” What is to be praised in the event of the Cross is the love of

⁵⁷ Johannes Nissen, “Community and Ethics in the Gospel of John,” in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives*, ed. J. Nissen and S. Pedersen, JSNTS 182 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 202.

⁵⁸ Burrige, *Imitating Jesus*, 328.

God for the salvation of the world. Jesus' self-giving on the Cross expresses this fully: "No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (15.13). His action, moreover, reveals who he truly is: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" (10.11). This kind of self-sacrificing action is what living a virtuous life will lead to: it is living out the ethics of life-giving love. Jesus lived this life of love; and he calls his disciples to this life.

Such a life glorifies God in two ways. First, it reveals the depth of God's love to save the world and to give it eternal life. This is what Jesus' self-offering on the Cross for the salvation of the world witnesses to. Second, it unveils the truth that Jesus is *the* embodiment of God's saving love. This is who he is from the beginning of time: he is God's glory because he shares life with God and, with God, gives life to all (1.1-14). On the Cross, Jesus realizes the fullness of this identity and purpose: "I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed" (17.4-5). God then glorifies Jesus by raising him from the dead. His disciples recognized this glory when they encountered the risen Jesus. Thomas declares that the crucified and risen Jesus is his Lord and God (20.28). In John's Gospel, God's glory is thus inextricably tied to the person of Jesus: "The witness of the glory of Jesus, of his unity with the Father, in short, the witness of his divinity, is really the content of the Johannine message. The communication of content and the direct address are inseparable in John."⁵⁹ For Daniel Harrington, this is why the main theme in John is "Jesus as the revealer and the revelation of God."⁶⁰ Discipleship, he suggests, is a process "under Jesus'

⁵⁹ Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 49.

⁶⁰ Daniel Harrington, *Following Jesus: What the New Testament Teaches Us* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 38.

tutelage” of coming to know who he is so that they can follow him, and in following him, glorify God.

God’s glory as God’s beauty and rethinking discipleship

This chapter has identified Johannine discipleship to be about living out the modalities of Christian life. It involves practicing the virtues Jesus lived out in relationship with God and neighbor. A disciple can do this by interiorizing Jesus’ response-able loving; this is the Christ-like way of loving God and neighbor faithfully and completely to the end (εἰς τέλος). This is how a disciple can proclaim God’s glory, as Jesus did.

Proclaiming God’s glory is only possible, however, because disciples first see it in the crucified and risen Jesus. This suggests that God’s glory is meant to be seen by disciples: it is meant to draw them into life with God in Jesus, and from this communion for them to be sent forth to proclaim God to the world. The theme of glory is therefore important in understanding what discipleship is.

In John’s Gospel, glory “has to do with the way God is revealed to human beings.”⁶¹ The signs Jesus performs reveal “God’s glory by displaying divine power.”⁶² In these moments, “glory” is associated with honor and praise for God’s action in the Johannine narrative (5.41; 9.24). Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, on the other hand, reveal “God’s glory by conveying divine love.”⁶³ This is how “glory” is more frequently communicated in the gospel: Jesus is the splendor and radiance of God’s love. Three examples in John illustrate this. First, Jesus is God’s splendor that existed with God from the beginning: “glorify me in your presence with the glory (δόξῃ) that I had in your presence before the world began”

⁶¹ Koester, *The Word of Life*, 120.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 122.

(17.5). Second, Jesus reveals God’s splendor for disciples to see when they believe in him: “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory (δόξαν) of God” (11.40). Third, Jesus himself is God’s splendor disciples believe in: “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory (δόξαν); and his disciples believed in him” (2.11).

Hans Urs von Balthasar recognizes in John’s presentation of Jesus as the splendor of God’s glory the form for Christian discipleship.⁶⁴ Jesus is the revelatory form of God that a disciple sees, is captivated by, and is moved or transported to follow:

The Apostles were transported by what they saw, heard, and touched—by everything manifested in form. John, especially, but also the others, never tire of describing in ever new ways how Jesus’ figure stands out in his encounters and conversation; how, as the contours of his uniqueness emerge, suddenly and in an indescribable manner the rays of the Unconditional break through, casting a person down to adoration and transforming him into a believer and a follower.⁶⁵

But the splendor of God’s glory that a disciple is drawn to in Jesus and whom he follows in discipleship must be appreciated in terms of God’s beauty, Balthasar insists: “The form [of Jesus] as it appears to us,” he observes, “is beautiful only because the delight that it arouses in us is founded upon the fact that, in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed, and in this manifestation and bestowal reveal themselves to us as being something infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating.”⁶⁶ What is revealed in Jesus as the form of God’s glory is the beauty of the true and good love of God that creates, saves, and gives life to the full. This is the depth of God that we have seen Jesus reveal in John’s Gospel. With Balthasar, what is now disclosed as the unspoken subtext in John’s Gospel is Jesus as the form of God’s beauty.

⁶⁴ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume I*, 116.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

Our study of discipleship in John's Gospel leads finally to this disclosure that God's glory is really God's beauty, and that Jesus, especially in his crucified and risen body, is the proper form that reveals it. This raises the possibility to rethink Christian discipleship. If following Jesus is about "how man can come to correspond totally to God according to the archetype of Christ and in imitation of him,"⁶⁷ the question that must now be addressed is, "What can it mean to follow Jesus who is the form of God's beauty?" This is the focus of Chapter 2, wherein I will draw on the theology of Balthasar to address it.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 116.

Chapter 2: Envisioning a Discipleship of Beauty with Balthasar

We learnt in our study of discipleship in John's Gospel that the glory of God's love is also the splendor of God's beauty. Jesus, especially on the Cross and in the Resurrection, is the proper form that reveals this. For John, the beauty of God's love that creates, saves and gives life in Jesus is not meant to be experienced as aesthetic pleasure. Rather, it is to be embraced for the fuller life one can have in Jesus; one gains this by choosing to follow Jesus on his mission of revealing God in the world. This way of seeing and following Jesus involves looking with eyes of faith: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29). Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, and her subsequent proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah to other Samaritans who then come to believe in Jesus, exemplifies what this discipleship is about (John 4.1-41). But the reality of encountering, following, and proclaiming Jesus as the form of God's beauty also suggests that discipleship is about taking on this particular form of Jesus in life and for ministry. For Breandán Leahy, discipleship is about letting "the glorious form of Christ be shaped into our whole being."⁶⁸ This conformation is the focus of the present chapter: to reflect on what following Jesus as the form of God's beauty can mean for discipleship.

This chapter reflects on this concern by paying attention to how disciples can see, engage, and speak about God's beauty in Jesus whom they follow in order to manifest this beauty as God's salvific love for the world. Three elements are necessary for such a discipleship: perceiving God's beauty in Jesus; proclaiming God's beauty as Jesus reveals it; and taking on Jesus' way of loving God and neighbor to reveal God's beauty to them. These

⁶⁸ Breandán Leahy, "Theological Aesthetics," in *The Beauty of Christ: A Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. B. McGregor and T. Norris (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 46.

elements echo Catherine LaCugna's observation that the "'spiritual life' of Christians is nothing more than training the eye of the heart on the glory of God, and living in such a way that one acquires the habit (*habitus*) of discerning the brilliance of God's glory."⁶⁹ A discipleship of beauty aspires to realize this too. It seeks to form a disciple to imbibe Jesus' insight into God; this will better enable him to see, to live, and to act in the world while keeping his gaze on God, like Jesus did. In turn, this imbibing will empower him to help others see God's glory in their midst. Thus, a discipleship of beauty "is not simply an external following of Christ, but it is the living out of a new life on the basis of an inner transformation."⁷⁰ This transformation, in turn, is how God works through the disciple to transform others. The beauty of this kind of discipleship is that the disciple comes to take on the likeness of Jesus, the fullness of God's beauty, so that he himself can become for others a Christ-like form of God's beauty.

However, this way of reflecting about discipleship must involve a renewed way of thinking about how one follows Jesus. It should not focus on the "capacities and dispositions" for discipleship; this diminishes God's role in discipleship. Rather, it must focus on how "the disclosure of the truth, goodness and beauty of God in Christ" *informs and forms* one for discipleship.⁷¹ Thus, the general question this chapter endeavors to answer is "What can it mean to follow Jesus who is the form God's beauty?" To do this, I will sub-divide the chapter into three more focused sub-questions. These center on a disciple's following of Jesus: "What can enable a disciple to perceive God's beauty in Jesus?"; "What can a disciple proclaim God's beauty to be as it is revealed by Jesus?"; and "What hope can a disciple have in

⁶⁹ Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (Chicago: Harper One, 1993), 345.

⁷⁰ Howsare, *Balthasar: A Guide*, 117.

⁷¹ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume I*, 150-57.

following Jesus as the form of God's beauty?"

Balthasar's theology can help answer these questions because of the importance he places on Jesus as the objective form of God's beauty. That is, in Jesus we come to understand who God is and what God does in terms of beauty. His focus provides a helpful optic to look at discipleship. For Balthasar, beauty is as equally important as the transcendentals of truth and goodness are for thinking and speaking about God. He reclaims beauty so as to return our theological gaze onto Jesus, wherein "the primary contemplation of what is really said, really presented to us, really meant" can enable us to better appreciate the truthfulness and goodness of God.⁷² This theological insight grounds this chapter and directs its reflection.

Balthasar's theology provides the following approaches to respond to the three sub-questions that are raised above. Balthasar's theological aesthetics allows us to discuss the first sub-question in terms of how a disciple perceives and engages God's beauty in Christ with faith. His trinitarian theology enables us to address the second sub-question in terms of what a disciple can proclaim about God's beauty as it is revealed in the crucified and risen Christ. This is the glory of God's saving and transforming love. This love is trinitarian: it embodies the mutual self-giving love that is exchanged between Christ the Son and God the Father in the Spirit, the love that is poured forth into the world for its salvation. This event of trinitarian self-giving is the beauty of God that the disciple can proclaim in grateful love. Finally, Balthasar's eschatology helps us to appreciate Jesus' "eucharistic form" as the hope the disciple can have in following him to reveal God's beauty. I understand "eucharistic form" to be the fullest expression of response-able loving that saves and transforms because it is fundamentally self-offering. Eucharistic form is, in turn, the eschatological hope a disciple can have because it is the promised fullness of what he can mature into by following Jesus:

⁷² Ibid., 31.

having the likeness of God's trinitarian and kenotic loving. Jesus, the Word made flesh who gives himself totally onto death and whom God raises from the dead into the fullness of life, attests to this hope. The form this likeness has is eucharistic self-offering to God, and in this action, praise of God's love is what this form ultimately proclaims.

Balthasar's writings display an interest in and attention to how a believer ought to follow Jesus. In "Vocation," he writes that every vocation should imitate Christ's self-giving obedience in order to participate in God's salvific plan. For him, discipleship, the primary vocation all believers are called to, must be rooted in the life of Christ. Discipleship thereby entails "the expropriation of a private existence into the function of universal salvation: handing over oneself over to God, in order to be surrendered by him to the world that is to be redeemed, and to be used and spent in the event of the redemption."⁷³ This pattern of discipleship must involve how a disciple can perceive, proclaim, and imitate Jesus who is the imitable form of God's beauty.

What can enable a disciple to perceive God's beauty in Jesus?

Three things are needed for seeing: the object being looked at; the event of seeing, that is, the encounter between the subject and the object; and the subject who sees this object. These three aspects explain how we see in the world. In this section, I survey how Balthasar uses this tripartite structure to explain how we can see and follow Jesus in his form as God's beauty.

Balthasar demonstrates how one perceives God's beauty when he argues for a theological aesthetics in *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*. For him, the task of theological aesthetics is to see Jesus Christ as "the form of God's self-revelation" and to interpret this

⁷³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Vocation," *Communio* 37 (2010): 114.

revelation of Jesus as “the incarnation of God’s glory,” especially on the Cross and in the Resurrection.⁷⁴ This is what a disciple finds himself enraptured with upon seeing Jesus: “that God is revealed, to put it simply, precisely in Christ’s humanity, not ‘behind’ it or in spite of it.”⁷⁵ This revelation, Balthasar argues further, leads a disciple to participate in the life of God. “For the object with which we are concerned is man’s participation in God which, from God’s perspective, is actualized as ‘revelation’ (culminating in Christ’s Godmanhood) and which, from man’s perspective, is actualized as ‘faith’ (culminating in participation in Christ’s Godmanhood).”⁷⁶ This unity of seeing and participating in the beauty of God Jesus reveals provides a disciple with genuine knowledge of God. Balthasar explains: “This is seeing and knowing in the Johannine sense...it is a vision of glory (1.14 etc.) which in faith can only be progressive.”⁷⁷ Thus, a disciple comes to know God and to grow in faith in God because encountering Jesus is always the event of knowing God in him.⁷⁸ This section, then, sets forth how a disciple can perceive God’s beauty in Jesus, particularly in the singular event of his being lifted up in glory on the Cross and in the Resurrection. This is the site where one encounters God’s beauty in Christ, and the disciple is the subject who sees God’s beauty in Christ.

For Balthasar, Jesus is the definitive form of God’s self-communication. Through Jesus, we see God using “created Being at a new depth as a language and a means of expression for the divine Being and essence”; Jesus is thus “the Word, the Image, the Expression of God.”⁷⁹ Balthasar’s observation is Johannine; what he demonstrates is the

⁷⁴ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 122.

⁷⁵ Howsare, *Balthasar: A Guide*, 126.

⁷⁶ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 122.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

necessary “acknowledgment of this interrelation (John 10.38), for whoever would know Jesus without the Father would know nothing.”⁸⁰ To know Jesus is to know God; he is the Son who exegetes the Father (cf. John 1.18) whom he proclaims and, more so, whom he himself manifests. The Johannine Jesus reveals his relationship with God to be one that mutually witnesses to their distinctive yet interdependent love for one another. Balthasar interprets this relationship as follows:

The Father is ground; the Son is manifestation. The Father is content, the Son is form—in the unique way shown by revelation. Here, too, there is no ground without manifestation, no content without form.⁸¹

Jesus is therefore “the eidos or form of God.”⁸² In and through him, Balthasar explains, God attests authentically to Godself: God the Father “accredits the Son’s words and works as stemming from himself, the Father; by so doing he also accredits the Son’s form of humiliation and obedience as the authentic expression of the divine nature.”⁸³ Hence, to look at Jesus is to look at the one whom he expresses, God, even as he directs one’s gaze to God through his words and actions.⁸⁴

More specifically, for Balthasar, Jesus is the revelatory form of God’s beauty a disciple sees. The beauty of God is the glory of the love of God that creates, saves, and transforms; this glory radiates most fully from the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ. For Balthasar, this love of God is “a love that originates in the Father’s deed of surrender for the world and is expressed in the Son’s deed of surrender, of the outpouring of his life for the life of the world”; their mutual self-giving love meets on the Cross, and this reveals fully “the

⁸⁰ Ibid., 594.

⁸¹ Ibid., 594.

⁸² Ibid., 592.

⁸³ Ibid., 597.

⁸⁴ Balthasar explains this as the “appearance of the form as revelation of the depths,” that is, “an indissoluble union of two things”: “it is the real presence of the depths of the whole reality and it is a real pointing beyond itself to these depths.” See *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 115-16.

indivisible essential love of God himself.”⁸⁵ Chapter 1 discussed the love Jesus and God share in terms of fidelity to relationship. Now, Balthasar illuminates the nature of this revealed love of God to be self-giving and self-emptying love that saves:

just as we can never attain to the living God in any way except through his Son become man, but in this Son we really attain to God in himself, so, too, we ought never to speak of God’s beauty without reference to the form and manner of appearing which he exhibits in salvation-history. The beauty and glory which are proper to God may be inferred and ‘read’ off from God’s epiphany and its incomprehensible glory which is worthy of God himself.⁸⁶

According to Balthasar, this is why it is important to embrace John’s understanding that the event of Jesus being raised up on the cross and his being raised up into glory is *the* singular event that best allows a disciple to appreciate fully God’s beauty. The beauty a disciple sees in this event is the glory of God’s love transforming the human person into its fullest expression: this is the moment when the man-Jesus truly attains the fullness of his divine form. This event expresses the mutual self-giving love between Father and Son in the Spirit: in Jesus on the Cross God’s love saves, and in Jesus being raised from the dead God’s love transfigures, and in their Spirit humankind is promised salvation. This is why Balthasar insists that the beauty of God is to be found in the face of the crucified and risen One.

The act of beholding the beauty of God’s love in Jesus, Balthasar also argues, draws a disciple into participating in the life of God.⁸⁷ The act of seeing God’s beauty is not a passive way of looking. Rather, it demands from the observer an active response to see and to live out God’s beauty that shines forth through Jesus.⁸⁸ According to Balthasar, one begins to see in this active way by freely choosing to empty himself so as to receive the Christ form as the optic with which to see God more authentically. This involves receptivity. For him, Mary

⁸⁵ Ibid., 599.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 216.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 186.

exemplifies how receptivity is necessary to respond rightly and fully to Jesus, in whom she perceives God's beauty. Her *fiat* is a self-emptying to receive God's Word that in turn raises her to participate in God's salvific action through its indwelling.⁸⁹ Following Mary's example, Balthasar notes that disciples do not see and respond to God by reflecting on themselves; rather, they see and respond to "the fact that they have been addressed and called by this divine miracle," Jesus.⁹⁰ Following Mary's example, Balthasar insists that thanksgiving must always be the first movement one makes to commune with God.

This active way of seeing God's beauty by receiving the Christ form is what enables spiritual seeing. It is seeing with eyes of faith and with the grace of God. It is about seeing the presence of God in the physical form and participating in it. For Balthasar, faith and grace are necessary for seeing God's beauty in Jesus and for participating in God's beauty. In John's Gospel, a disciple first responds to Jesus in faith with his bodily senses. Whether he hears, sees, or is touched by Jesus, who appears to him in the world, the disciple perceives him physically. This is what Andrew and his companion do upon hearing the Baptist speak about Jesus, and when they go and see where he lives (John 1.29-42). Faith is God's gift to see, to know, and to respond to God in and through Christ.⁹¹ It enables one to behold the God in whom one believes through Christ; even more, faith allows one to hope in God through Christ. Faith also bestows the believer with the *eros* or enthusiasm for God, and the desire for participation.⁹² This faith begins by first seeing and receiving Jesus as God's Word with one's

⁸⁹ Balthasar discusses this in *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 330-34; 535-56.

⁹⁰ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Volume 3*, as quoted by Michael Paul Gallagher, *Faith Maps: Ten Religious Explorers from Newman to Joseph Ratzinger* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2010), 50.

⁹¹ Balthasar writes that faith is "God's giving himself to be recognized and man's familiar and intimate knowledge of God, which is based upon that gift, are the condition for man's being able to trust God and to deliver himself over to him with fidelity, in faith and in hope." See *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 127.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 117; 122-24.

bodily senses. But these same senses are also the means to see spiritually, according to Balthasar. Grace transforms these physical senses into spiritual senses.⁹³ These enable a disciple to see beyond Jesus' physical form; they empower him to see God being revealed in him. These spiritual senses imbue a disciple with an interior spiritual sensibility to perceive God. They enable him to do this by allowing him to empty himself, to reach out to Jesus and to open himself to receiving the revelation of God in Jesus. More significantly, they help him to be conformed to the Christ form in whom he sees how Christ's bodily senses are also his spiritual senses that direct him spiritually for life with God and in love for neighbor.⁹⁴ In John's Gospel, Andrew's transformation from physically seeing Jesus the Rabbi to proclaiming him as Messiah to Simon exemplifies this dynamic. Thus, grace empowers a disciple to respond to Jesus, and through him to participate in God's beauty. For Balthasar, "Christian grace is grace according to the Christ-form."⁹⁵ Jesus Christ is therefore the proper name of grace. In making present God and God's beauty to humankind in his "inner light and outer form,"⁹⁶ Jesus expresses the convergence of God in man and man in God, of the splendor of the divine in the fullness of humanity. Thus, grace enables the disciple to respond to, to participate in, and to be transformed by participation in God's beauty in Jesus.

According to Balthasar, these movements of seeing and participating are rooted in and animated by Jesus in whom disciples come to perceive what they have been "redeemed and

⁹³ Balthasar discusses how perceiving God in Christ is a unity of the bodily and spiritual senses, which is always the truth about the human person as he relates to God; he is always a concrete and indivisible whole. See *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 356-421.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 414.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁹⁶ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Volume 2: Studies in Theological Styles*, trans. A. Louth, F. McDonagh, and B. McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009), 315.

saved from: the definitive loss of God.”⁹⁷ As the sight of grace, Jesus grounds and animates how a disciple’s perception of God’s beauty is salvific. Such seeing de-centers the self, opening and moving one towards re-centering his gaze, and eventually his life, on God through Christ. In Jesus’ Spirit, moreover, one’s participation in God’s beauty takes on the same mutual self-giving love God and Jesus share on the Cross. This is an *ek-static* movement, which is what an encounter with beauty always effects; it moves the disciple towards God who is infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating.⁹⁸ This movement saves: it transforms him because his seeing impresses upon him the Christ-form he contemplates.⁹⁹

The faith and grace that enable a disciple to see and to participate in God’s beauty in Jesus is therefore ultimately for conversion. It is about turning away from oneself to God, and, more so, about becoming like Christ in God’s beauty.¹⁰⁰ Balthasar calls this “a Christian ‘attunement’ to or ‘consonance’ with God.”¹⁰¹ This involves “the progressive growth of one’s existence into Christ’s existence.”¹⁰² The goal of this attunement is for mission: “no one is enraptured [with Christ] without returning, from this encounter, with a personal mission.”¹⁰³ This is why for Balthasar the true measure of seeing God’s beauty in Christ must lie in the disciple faithfully living out Christ’ self-giving love for his neighbor. This is when his bodily

⁹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, trans. D.C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 93.

⁹⁸ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 118.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 510.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁰³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Volume 2: The Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, trans. G. Harrison. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 17.

senses become truly Christian senses: “they have been formed according to the form of Christ.”¹⁰⁴

So far I have discussed the three elements needed to see and to participate in the beauty of God in Jesus. However, this experience only becomes meaningful when it is shared. In the next section, I consider what a disciple can share about God’s beauty, and how he can proclaim it.

What can a disciple proclaim God’s beauty to be as it is revealed by Jesus?

God’s beauty that the crucified and risen Christ reveals demands to be seen. It makes this demand on the disciple in order to save him; seeing Christ draws him into participating in the life of God. This is why Christian discipleship is Good News. By its very nature of being *evangelium*, moreover, it demands to be proclaimed to others. According to Balthasar, the encounter with Christ always leads one to mission, that is, to “penetrate the secular world as leaven.”¹⁰⁵ This is how a disciple can cooperate with Jesus to transform the world in its seeming ugliness into something of God’s beauty. However, he needs to know what about God’s beauty that he sees in Jesus is worthy for proclamation as Good News.

This section draws on Balthasar’s trinitarian theology to help a disciple appreciate what God’s beauty is. This theology is founded on, and articulates, God’s beauty in terms of the trinitarian drama of God’s salvific plan. This unfolds in the world that is its stage. Balthasar calls this theo-drama; it is distinguished by the interplay of mutual self-giving love or *kenōsis* between the divine persons on the Cross and in the Resurrection for the salvation of the world. This is how Balthasar’s trinitarian theology offers the disciple knowledge about what God’s

¹⁰⁴ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 414.

¹⁰⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *My Work in Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 103.

beauty really is: the distinctly kenotic nature and action of God's saving and transfiguring love in Christ. In particular, this section draws primarily on *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*,¹⁰⁶ as it does on Balthasar's other writings, to discuss how understanding God's beauty unfolds for proclamation.

For Balthasar, a disciple comes to understand what God's beauty really is about in the glory of God a disciple sees in the crucified and risen Jesus: "The God who becomes man in order to die and to rise is the only glory of God's that is manifested in the world; Christ is God's total *doxa*, which dwells within him 'corporeally' (Col 2.9), and from Christ's indissoluble form his glory sheds its light on the cosmos."¹⁰⁷ Balthasar appreciates this revelation of God's glory in terms of the faithfulness to relationship God the Father and Jesus the Son play out in the trinitarian drama of the Cross and the Resurrection.¹⁰⁸ Disciples witness in Jesus the fidelity of loving God and neighbor to the end: he obediently offers himself in self-giving love to complete the Father's will that all may be saved. Jesus' total self-giving to the Father, Rowan Williams notes, reproduces in history the Father's first act of total self-giving love to the world from eternity.¹⁰⁹ What is evident here is that the Son's self-giving love to redeem humankind both imitates and enfleshes the Father's initial self-giving love to the Son for the world's salvation. This drama continues in the Resurrection. The

¹⁰⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Volume 5: The Last Act*, trans. G. Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998).

¹⁰⁷ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 211.

¹⁰⁸ A distinguishing feature of Balthasar's interpretation of the crucifixion is his presentation of Jesus' experience of abandonment and forsakenness on the Cross. He adopts this Markan perspective on the Crucifixion to interpret how God's glory is revealed on the Cross in this experience of separation. For him, God's glory shines through when the extreme plenitude of the Father's saving love in the Resurrection fills the void of Jesus' extreme abandonment in his Crucifixion, which is the necessary and total self-giving he makes to save the world. This Balthasarian interpretation is however not the focus of this study into the beauty of God's glory and discipleship. For Balthasar's discussion on separation as the mode to appreciate God's glory see *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 256-265.

¹⁰⁹ Rowan Williams discusses this in his article, "Balthasar and the Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, trans. E. T. Oakes and D. Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 37-50.

Father faithfully and lovingly reciprocates the Son's love: he gives the crucified man-Jesus the fullness of life by raising him from the dead. "Only in the concluding moment of the resurrection does the figure of Jesus attain, for the first time, its true form," Balthasar insists.¹¹⁰ The risen Christ is therefore the true and definitive form of a loving God in whose Spirit human nature is redeemed and transformed. A disciple glimpses in this revelation the faithful love of God that saves and transforms the human person into the likeness of God's image. This is the resemblance human existence was created to become. Its fullest embodiment is in resurrection life. Jesus who lived his humanity fully to the Cross and who God raised from the dead attests to this promise. This transformation is also the beauty of God Jesus reveals.

According to Balthasar, one understands the truth of the beauty of God's love when one perceives that love is "the core of everything,"¹¹¹ including, as he insists, "death as well as life, fear as well as joy, what we call 'ugly' as well as what we call 'beautiful.'"¹¹² Knowing the beauty of God, moreover, will empower the disciple to proclaim the truth and goodness of God's beauty. The truth a disciple can communicate is that Jesus on the Cross is a communication of the selfhood of God. And the goodness that he can also proclaim is that in this hour of God's glory—a theophany, really—God's very plenitude, that is, the gift of God's love in the Son, saves. This is how the beauty of God shines through the darkness of evil, sin, and death.

These observations about God's love Jesus reveals can be developed to present three insights about God's beauty that a disciple comes to know by encountering him. This beauty

¹¹⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology, Volume 4: Spirit and Institution*, trans. E. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 54.

¹¹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Volume 7: Theology: the New Covenant*, trans. B. McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 19.

¹¹² Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 55-56.

has to do with God's identity and purpose; it offers knowledge about God that is worthy for proclamation.

First is knowledge that God is a God who is constituted by total and continuous self-giving: "The Father only is, as he who generates the Son, he who surrenders and pours himself out in the Son; and the Son is, only as he who utterly surrenders himself to the Father, acknowledging himself to be the Father's image and glory; the Spirit is, only as witness and expressing the love between the Father and Son proceeding from them."¹¹³ The trinitarian drama of the Cross and the Resurrection testifies to the reciprocal and free self-giving and receiving of love between the Father, Son and Spirit.¹¹⁴ They hold back nothing in their *perichoresis* of sharing mutual love, which is exercised in total freedom and marked by gift-giving. Balthasar describes this as the Father's self-surrender of the Son, the Son's response of a self-offering as thanksgiving to the Father, and the Spirit, who is the breathing forth of their love, binding them in communion.¹¹⁵

Second is knowledge about the salvific orientation of God's love. This is rooted in God's kenotic nature: "where God is defined as love, he must be in essence perfect self-giving, which can only elicit from the Beloved, in return, an equally perfect movement of thanksgiving, service and self-giving" in the Spirit.¹¹⁶ Since the Trinity is revealed on the Cross and in the Resurrection, it is in "the Kenosis of Christ (and nowhere else)" that "the

¹¹³ Balthasar, *The Word Made Flesh*, as quoted by Michelle A. Gonzalez, "Hans Urs von Balthasar and Contemporary Feminist Theology," *Theological Studies* 65 (2004): 586.

¹¹⁴ Balthasar describes this thus: "since the Other is begotten by the One and responds with total self-surrender, there is a genuine exchange, which is perfected and sealed in their joint breathing forth of the Spirit." See *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 105.

¹¹⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 4*, as quoted by John Médaille, "The Trinity as the Pattern of the World in the Theo-Drama." Accessed on 4 April 2013 as http://www.medaille.com/trinity_and_theo-drama.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 82.

inner majesty of God's love appears."¹¹⁷ *Kenōsis* is therefore the especial trinitarian form of God's love that Jesus reveals and embodies. More significantly, Jesus' kenotic loving is a kind of death that saves: it leads to fullness of life with God. In Jesus, the disciple appreciates how kenotic loving is about self-transcendence; it is a practice of self-forgetfulness in which one can lay down one's life for another. By imitating Jesus' kenotic way of loving, he can experience how his sinful, finite human life can be transformed into a fuller way of living the Christian faith. This is a life that only God can give. But it is a life already given from all eternity, as it is seen in the Father's initial kenotic loving—*itself a dying to self*—when he gives his Son for the redemption of the world. This is the beauty of God's salvation breaking forth as God's kenotic love for humankind.

Third is knowledge about why God gives of Godself to save. God does this to restore and to perfect what God had originally intended. A disciple sees this in the risen Jesus. Balthasar rightly insists that the beauty a disciple glimpses in the Resurrection means much more than the anticipated "eschatological manner of existence after the Resurrection"; it is also the realized fullness of the "servant-form" of God.¹¹⁸ This form originates in God's humble condescension in the Incarnation, and through a life of self-giving, it realizes its fullness on the Cross and in the Resurrection. This "servant-form" is for mission; it is for serving and saving the world in love. Jesus is the Incarnation of this servant-form of God; his life and death are one transformation in which the love of God glorifies itself. For Balthasar, such a transformation—*really, a transfiguration*—is rooted in and realized through God's kenotic love. He explains:

what is involved is a double, reciprocal dispossession: of God into the human form and of

¹¹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone: the Way to Revelation*, trans. Unnamed (London: Herder & Herder, 1968), 71.

¹¹⁸ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume 1*, 651-52.

man into the divine form, and this double dispossession contains the most concrete possible life: the life of man, which attains its form by letting itself be shattered to become the form of God; the life of God that gains man for itself by renouncing its own form and, obedient unto death, pouring itself into the form of existence unto death.¹¹⁹

This revelation is reassuring and hope-filled: God gives of Godself to save humankind and to perfect it for communion with God. This has always been God's intention in creation.

Taken together, the Cross and the Resurrection tell the disciple as much about who he is to God and why God loves deeply to save him in Jesus and through the Spirit, as they tell him about God's beauty. They tell him that he is worthy of redemption and that he is meant to be one with God. Jesus' death as man and God's raising him up from the dead attest to the double movement of God's love for humankind: it is the love of God a disciple experiences in Jesus "as the 'descent' of God into the 'flesh'" that saves, and "as the 'ascent' of the flesh into the spirit" that transforms.¹²⁰ In addition, a disciple comes to see in the crucified and risen Jesus that God saves in order to transform and reconstitute what God had originally created.¹²¹ Jesus' resurrection offers the disciple the hope that his human form will be transformed; it will be reconstituted in the present as the image and likeness of God it was created to become, even as he awaits the fullness of this transformation with Christ's second coming. In Jesus' death and resurrection, his exaltation, then, is "the inseparable deed and proof of God's eternal love" that assures that "the man who has died in faith already lives in the risen Lord" as God's new creation.¹²² Therefore, God's action in this matter is nothing less than the transformation of humanity that is most disfigured by evil and sin into the glory of Jesus' resurrection; and this manifests God's beauty as the hope of communing with God in God's

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 654.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 461.

¹²¹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 321.

¹²² Ibid., 356.

redeeming, radiant light of love. This is what humankind's redemption as new creation promises. This too is an essential part of a disciple's proclamation of God's beauty.

In this section, I have argued how the disciple comes to know the beauty of God as God's kenotic love that saves and transforms. This is knowledge of God a disciple can proclaim when he follows Jesus as the form of God's beauty. However, as one sees God's beauty in Jesus and proclaims it as the truth and goodness of a God who loves selflessly, he would also naturally ask, "What can I eventually hope for as I follow Jesus as his disciple?"

What hope can a disciple have in following Jesus as the form of God's beauty?

"Who am I?" and "What is the purpose of my existence?" are perhaps the most foundational questions we ask as human beings. Disciples ask the same questions to make sense of their identity and discipleship. More significantly, their questions are grounded on a hope they seek to find, and so, to explain why they see, follow, and proclaim Jesus as God's Good News. To answer these questions, I draw from Balthasar's eschatology as presented in *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*.

This chapter concludes by focusing on Jesus as the *eschatos* of God's beauty for two reasons. First, it provides a response to the question "What can I hope for as a disciple?" that disciples often ask when they encounter, follow, and proclaim Jesus. It draws from Balthasar's eschatology to explain how Jesus is God's salvific hope that Christian discipleship promises. Second, it demonstrates how the proper form of this hope is eucharistic, as it is exemplified in Jesus who is the *eschatos* of God's beauty. These reasons help explain why Jesus' eucharistic form is the proper pattern for disciples to relate rightly to God and to one another, and, in this way, to realize the fullness of their special identity and purpose in a discipleship of beauty. Living eucharistically glorifies God, for it also reveals the beauty of

such a discipleship. This is how this section further clarifies what else is also involved in a discipleship of beauty: the salvific hope of following Jesus and the eucharistic form that is its particular expression.

This eucharistic form has to do with self-giving love for another. The Johannine practice of response-able loving enables this form, which is expressed in two ways. First, as self-offering. A disciple sees this especially in Jesus' self-giving on the Cross in faithfulness to God. For Balthasar, this form expresses absolute love because it is "a perfect response for the act of the One who sends; he is the One who, in all his doings, always gave and gives what is most his own."¹²³ This form is therefore rooted in thanksgiving. Second, as giving life. In John's Gospel, Jesus' eucharistic form is connected to his miracles that give God's life to the people.¹²⁴ In particular, the connection between the multiplication of loaves and Jesus' self-proclamatory statement that he is the Bread of Life enables a disciple to see Jesus' eucharistic form (John 6.1-13). But Jesus' action of giving life is grounded in his more foundational act of self-offering: "the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6.51b). It is this aspect of Jesus' self-offering—as he practiced it throughout his life and as he fulfilled completely on the Cross—that this section will argue is his eucharistic form. It is this form that Christian discipleship must always have, self-giving. More significantly, this form is the hope-filled promise of following Jesus; it is the beauty of what a disciple becomes in a discipleship of self-giving—more like Christ's eucharistic form. Balthasar explains: following Jesus is embracing the truth of how one's measure of self-giving is the measure of one's

¹²³ Ibid., 326.

¹²⁴ Jerome Kodell makes the point that "rather than connecting the Eucharist to the Last Supper, John has reference to it throughout the story of Jesus' life: the wine at Cana (2.1-12; possibly), the loaves of multiplication (6.1-13), the vine and the branches (15.1-8)." For him, these attest that Jesus' words and actions are eucharistic because they give God's life. See *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 118-129.

divinization.¹²⁵

Balthasar's theological aesthetics and trinitarian theology have enabled us to understand that Jesus is indeed the form of God's beauty. We can see and participate in it, even as we come to know that the beauty of God that Jesus reveals is the glory of God's kenotic loving that saves and transfigures. Balthasar's eschatology further enriches how we can appreciate Jesus as the privileged sight for a disciple to understand his identity and purpose. When a disciple looks at Jesus, especially on the Cross and in the Resurrection, and sees in him God's beauty, what he comes to experience and to know about Jesus is his eschatological form as the risen Christ. In the Paschal Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection, "Christ's body has become finally and definitively eucharistic, both since he suffered for all human sin and since the mode of being of this body has been assimilated to the trinitarian being of the ascended Son: its being is not for itself but the other."¹²⁶ Christ's body is first and always eucharistic: in the incarnation it is kenotic, and on the Cross this kenotic way of being comes into its fullest expression as self-offering. For Balthasar, the kenotic disposition of the man-Jesus, this trinitarian way of loving, affirms the glory of God's love. It also constitutes the beauty of his eucharistic form, which is the truth and goodness of becoming divinized in the image of the Triune God. "Here too the eschaton is not man but the triune God, who in Christ's Cross, descent into hell, and Resurrection undergirds all human activity—whether it be sin or love."¹²⁷ Balthasar sees this in Jesus' humble and obedient participation in his God-given mission faithfully to the end as the Father's Son. What the disciple comes to realize when seeing the risen Christ is that this is the fulfillment of who he has always been, the fullness of the *imago dei*. This is the salvific hope of redemption Christ promises to his disciples.

¹²⁵ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 451.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 382.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 368.

If the human person is also created as *imago dei*, he is only truly so if his life is lived—even better, when it is totally spent and laid down—to give another life in and through God’s Spirit. Balthasar argues that such a life must be an *imitatio Christi*, after the manner of Jesus’ kenotic loving in the Spirit. Only then is the glory of God fully alive in the person, and the splendor of who he is in God; this then is the reality of God’s beauty shining forth in and through him. This is how Christian discipleship must be lived. Jesus exemplifies it in John’s Gospel with his life and ministry, and he teaches it to his disciples: “Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another” (13.34), for it is in this mutual and life-giving love that God will be glorified (15.9). We have already discussed in Chapter 1 how these dynamics enable disciples to follow the Johannine Jesus. What Balthasar now illuminates about John’s presentation of Christian discipleship is that the disciple must relate to God as Jesus did to the Father in the Spirit—that is, in the trinitarian form of kenotic love. Jesus’ response-able manner of loving God and neighbor that Chapter 1 discussed as the pattern for discipleship enfleshes kenotic loving: this way of loving is really trinitarian because it is about the mutual self-giving and receiving of love; and this is at the heart of living fully faithful and virtuous relationships with God and neighbor that Jesus exemplifies in John’s Gospel. More significantly, for a disciple, this manner of loving kenotically like Jesus must involve taking on his “form of obedient response to the Father’s call to a unique, personal mission.” Balthasar further explains: “It is when God addresses a conscious subject, tells him who he is and what he means to the eternal God of truth and shows him the purpose of his existence—that is, imparts a distinctive and divinely authorized mission—that we can say of a conscious subject that he is a ‘person.’”¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Volume 3, *The Dramatis Personae: The Person of Christ*, trans. G. Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 207.

Like Jesus on the Cross and in the Resurrection, a disciple realizes the fullness of his personhood as Jesus' disciple when he lives out his obedient response to God's mission to the end (εἰς τέλος), even if this leads to the Cross. Thus, the mission a disciple, who practices a discipleship of beauty has, is to realize Christ's eucharistic imprint in his life; this is what Baptism bestowed on him and what discipleship calls him to realize through Christ-like living. This is how he will take on the likeness of Christ's distinct eucharistic character. This then is the connection between Jesus' eucharistic form and a disciple's hope: it is about practicing one's discipleship according to Jesus' form of eucharistic self-giving and, in this way, experiencing the hope of becoming like Christ. This promised hope is also the beauty of what disciples can become in the double sense of "to follow" (ἀκολουθέω): to walk behind, that is, in the footsteps of, and to commit oneself to imitating, Jesus who lives eucharistically. This hope, moreover, is prophetic: it is about making God's love present in and through one's eucharistic life by loving God and neighbor through self-giving love in the world. To live and act and witness eucharistically, then, is to live in Jesus and through his Spirit, and in this manner, to manifest the beauty of God's transformation of humankind.

Thus, Christian discipleship must be about emptying oneself in order to receive God's saving and transfiguring love. This action empowers one to become what Christ witnesses to as the promised glory of the human form—that beautiful form of God's love. This is the form of God's beauty Christ reveals because when he "the Son allows himself to be poured out, he directly reveals the love of the Father, who manifests himself in his Son's *eucharistia*."¹²⁹ According to Balthasar, "Man's dying within the paradigm of Christ's death, his purification in the fire of Christ's love that is set forth on the Cross," is how he will attain this form because it "causes man's self-centered "I" to explode and take on a eucharistic and trinitarian

¹²⁹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 384.

form”); and this, in turn, enables the disciple to be brought into and to participate in Christ’s own eucharistic self-offering.¹³⁰ The disciple, however, cannot attain this eucharistic form by grasping and possessing it. Rather, he must continually open himself to practicing kenotic loving; then, he will engender himself as God’s gifted event of beauty to and for one another.

More significantly, it is in his grateful response of offering back to God what he first received—life, faith, the call to discipleship—that a disciple will fulfill the purpose of following Jesus: to give praise to God. In this way, Jesus’ eucharistic form is both the model and the condition for a disciple to realize the beauty of Christian discipleship. It is therefore the right pattern for a discipleship of beauty; following Jesus in this way, disciples can relate to God and to one another in and through kenotic love to reveal God’s beauty in the world. Moreover, this eucharistic gift-giving of oneself back to God and, like Jesus, in loving service of others, makes one’s discipleship credible. This is the necessary Christ-like action, empowered by grace, that Jesus calls a disciple to by following him. More specifically, this manner of following is about the transformation of his life into Christ’s form and measure. A disciple sees the exemplar of love, of total self-sacrificing love for God and for neighbor, in Jesus. More significantly, it is by participating in this way of loving that he distinguishes his own practice of discipleship; it is marked by an excess, by the more, that, like Christ, leads the disciple to selfless love that proclaims the glory of God’s love and lets it shine as God’s beauty. Balthasar elaborates:

Christian action is therefore a being taken up into God’s action through grace, being taken up into God’s love so that one can love with him. It is only here that (Christian) knowledge about God becomes possible, for ‘he who does not love, does not know God; for God is love’ (1 John 4.8). Love, in this context, means unconditional commitment, which implicitly (that is, when necessary) includes a willingness to go all the way to one’s death. ‘Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his

¹³⁰ Ibid., 484.

life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren' (1 John 3.16).¹³¹

This kind of discipleship is credible because it is costly discipleship; the disciple must embrace the foolishness of divine love (1 Corinthians 1.25). This is the kind of love Jesus had; it involves a self-giving that trusts completely in the love of God that will surely save, even in the face of death.

With the help of Balthasar's eschatology, I have shown how Christ's eucharistic form helps a disciple better understand what he sees in Jesus, how he can better participate in God's beauty, and why his discipleship can be his hope-filled salvation. These explain why this form is appropriate for practicing a discipleship of beauty. His eschatology also profoundly enriches how we understand God's beauty as the glory of God's saving and transforming love. The divine beauty is not something we passively wait for as a distant advent to come and be fulfilled. Rather, Balthasar's insight that Jesus is the *eschatos*—whose eucharistic form and sacrifice a disciple can live out through a life of constant and faithful kenotic loving—should assure disciples that Jesus is their abiding hope in the present. Thus, Christian discipleship is hope-filled because it is always about participating in the eucharistic form of Jesus' way of loving God and neighbor: "Far from meaning that we are left behind without hope, it means that we are already sharing in the 'ever-more' of incarnational life."¹³² For Balthasar, this must involve living out Jesus' response-able way of loving because it faithfully enfleshes the trinitarian way of loving kenotically and also taking on "the Son's subjection, which is a form of the Eucharist for all eternity" and through whom "all things are marked with the sign of God."¹³³ This testifies to the eschatological dimension of God's beauty: it comes from eternity to finite, limited humankind in Jesus as God's gift of hope that all things

¹³¹ Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, 116-17.

¹³² Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 520.

¹³³ Adrienne von Speyr, *I Korinther*, as quoted by Balthasar in *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 521.

can be in communion with God. Such a life, offered back to God in loving self-offering, can flourish in the here and now; it is the hope-filled reality of the promised communion for eternity come to live for a disciple.

To review: Chapter 2 envisioned what a discipleship of beauty can be when disciples follow Jesus as the form of God's beauty. With Balthasar, it identified and described three elements necessary to follow Jesus as the form of God's beauty. First, learning how to see and to participate in God's beauty that Jesus reveals as its particular form. Second, coming to know the beauty of God in terms of the triune God's kenotic love, a love that that saves and transforms, in Jesus; this is the Good News a disciple can and must proclaim. Third, interiorizing Jesus' eucharistic form as the salvific hope to better follow Jesus in Christ-like ways to reveal God's beauty. Together, they helped sketch out what a discipleship of beauty involves.

These elements also attest that Jesus, in whom God's beauty shines forth as the glory of God's trinitarian love, is the measure for a discipleship of beauty. He is the paradigm for how disciples are to appreciate, practice, and fulfill this kind of a discipleship. To look upon Jesus as incarnating the beauty of the trinitarian life through kenotic loving, to look upon Jesus "living from and for God, living from and for others,"¹³⁴ will always be a disciple's challenge to do likewise daily.

This returns us to the event of the Cross and the Resurrection. Here, Christ's eucharistic form diminishes the divide between the human and the divine; this is God's love that saves and transforms. This event manifests God's beauty. One experiences God's beauty, therefore, in action, not through a propositional statement. This is what a discipleship of beauty is also called to do for the salvation of the world: to make God's beauty real and alive through

¹³⁴ LaCugna, *God with Us*, 400.

enacted love. Disciples can do this when they interiorize the Christ-like disposition of response-ably loving God and neighbor that the Johannine Jesus embodies. With Balthasar, we see that this process of interiorizing Jesus' way of loving must also include the trinitarian way of loving kenotically to the end and the eucharistic form this loving takes.

But how is a disciple to do this today when Jesus is no longer present to be seen and to be imitated? This question has to do with practicing a discipleship of beauty in meaningful and relevant ways to help the community experience God's beauty in their midst. Chapter 3 will respond to this question. It will draw on Paul's spirituality of God's cruciform love to describe how a disciple can better live out this discipleship in today's world.

Chapter 3: Practicing a Discipleship of Beauty with Pauline “Cruciformity”

Having raised, in the first chapter on Johannine discipleship, the possibility of thinking about a discipleship of beauty, and having drawn, in the second chapter, on Balthasar’s theology to understand what kind of discipleship this can be, we are now positioned to focus on *how* a disciple of Jesus can practice it as he relates to others within the Church and in the world.

This chapter aims therefore to describe how today’s disciples can follow Jesus to manifest God’s beauty in and for the community. It builds on Chapter 1’s insight that discipleship entails following Jesus, who reveals God’s beauty to be the glory of God’s saving love. It also builds on Chapter 2’s insight that to follow Jesus as form of God’s beauty involves: perceiving God’s beauty in Jesus; proclaiming God’s beauty as Jesus reveals it; and taking on Jesus’ way of loving God and others to reveal God’s beauty. These insights help us to appreciate that practicing a discipleship of beauty must involve loving God and neighbor response-ably as Jesus did (as discussed in Chapter 1) and taking on his eucharistic form to practice this kind of loving (as illustrated in Chapter 2). Disciples are to live out Jesus’ command in the footwashing scene: “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13.15; cf. 13.34). In the present chapter, we sharpen our focus on how the footwashing scene in John is to be realized—in the interaction disciples have with the community in living their faith and doing their ministry. This is how disciples can live out and proclaim God’s beauty in the world, and so enable people to experience and to verify it, like

the disciples did in the Resurrection, especially Thomas who confesses God's glory Jesus is as his Lord by seeing and touching his wounds.¹³⁵

In order to follow Jesus in proclaiming God's beauty in the world, today's disciples first need to answer the question, "How can I follow Jesus—who calls me through faith, in Baptism, and with the Christian community—to live a discipleship of beauty, when he is no longer present to be seen and to be imitated?" This chapter will turn to Paul's spirituality of God's cruciform love to answer this. For Paul, God's cruciform love is God's righteousness that saves and reconciles, and that a disciple experiences in and through the faithfulness of Jesus on the Cross (Phil 3.9). In Jesus Christ, God's love cannot be anything less than cruciform. Jesus lived out this cruciform love of God on the Cross; it is the culmination of his response-able love for God and neighbor, as well as the embodiment of Jesus' eucharistic form of self-giving love in discipleship. This is how Jesus revealed God's beauty. These ways that Jesus lived and loved to manifest God's beauty is therefore an appropriate spirituality for disciples to imitate in order to practice a discipleship of beauty.

This chapter draws on Paul's letters because he bears witness in them to this experience of coming to know God's cruciform love in Christ, and of living it out with Christ in community. This spirituality is enabled when disciples receive the Spirit of the crucified and risen Jesus, so as to live out one's faith in God: "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faithfulness in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself to me" (Gal 2.20). It is this Spirit that empowers Paul—and, as he, teaches, every Christian—to live in the present life as God's redeemed, and to hope for the life to come as God's new creation: "we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might

¹³⁵ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Volume 5*, 150-151.

walk in newness of life” (Rom 6.4). To enrich the discussion of Paul, this chapter also draws largely on Gorman’s work on cruciform love. This spirituality of God’s cruciform love Paul teaches can help disciples to answer the question raised above because it is a spirituality they can identify with, imbibe as their own, and live out of in a discipleship of beauty. It is an especially appropriate spirituality for today’s disciples to live out so as to enact God’s beauty in a world that is marked by so much division and difference that personal and structural sin, injustice, and discrimination cause. This is so because it is a spirituality that embodies divine love that saves by reconciling division, and by transforming separation into communion, between humankind and God, and among one another in the Body of Christ. This *koinōnia* is the concrete event of God’s beauty in the world. A spirituality of God’s cruciform love empowers a disciple to realize this reconciling goal of a discipleship of beauty.

By focusing on Paul’s spirituality of God’s cruciform love, Chapter 3 offers a “blueprint” to live out a discipleship of beauty. This “blueprint” has three parts. First, it describes what a spirituality of God’s cruciform love is. It identifies three elements that make up this spirituality, and argues why these must be “indicative” for living the Christian life and accomplishing the Christian ministry. Second, it explains how disciples can live out this spirituality of cruciform love. They are to take on cruciformity, the Christ-like pattern of living and serving; this is how disciples can allow God’s Spirit of self-giving love to work through them to enact God’s beauty in the world. In turn, this practice transforms the recipient of the Spirit to become more Christ-like. Third, it describes what the experience of God’s beauty can be for a community when disciples live out a discipleship of beauty in the Spirit of cruciform love. The community experiences God’s beauty as the *koinōnia* of unity-in-diversity that reconciliation brings about when disciples work towards overcoming their

differences and sharing their charisms to build up the common good. They then attest to the Spirit of cruciform love alive in them.

Cruciform love: a basis of a spirituality for a discipleship of beauty

This section addresses the question, “What is a spirituality of cruciform love?” It describes how Paul understands God’s cruciform love and his insight that it must inform how one lives the Christian faith. It identifies three elements that constitute this spirituality. First, the importance of the gift of the Spirit to know the love of God. Second, the experience of God’s love as cruciform, that is, God’s righteousness saves and reconciles humankind, through the faithfulness of Jesus. Jesus’ faithfulness is the model for disciples to live this spirituality. Third, the restored covenant relationship that God’s cruciform love realizes. This is the event of God’s beauty that a cruciform spirituality is to participate in. These Pauline elements are “indicative” for a discipleship of beauty; they shape and enable the Christian life that disciples embody to be the living form of God’s beauty.

Christian faith and discipleship are important and inter-related themes in the Pauline letters. For Paul, a post-Resurrection disciple’s faith begins with the gift of God’s Spirit. In this Spirit, a disciple comes to know that humankind has been freed from sin by Jesus in order to live in freedom with and for God (Gal 1.4; 5.1). Paul explains: “For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 1.4-5). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son that is outpoured onto a sinful world through Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is unleashed as God’s gift for humankind to be in right relationship with God and with one another, and empowered to participate in God’s life and holiness. This is the same Spirit (the Paraclete) Jesus promises his disciples in John’s

Gospel—the Spirit who gives eternal life (3.6), enables proper worship of God (4.23-24), and offers comfort (14.16) and knowledge of the truth about Jesus (15.26). More significantly, this is the Spirit of truth that indwells in the disciples (14.17) and empowers them to live Christ-like lives (16.7-14). This experience of living one’s faith in the Spirit is called “spirituality.” One cannot live it out fully, however, without having an understanding of the Spirit.

For Paul, Christians come to know this Spirit at work in their lives through the preaching of the gospel and in baptism. Paul sees baptism as the formal portal into discipleship: “we have been buried with [Christ] by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6.3-4). This Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus (Rom 8:9-10) whose faithfulness to God is salvific. A disciple receives this Spirit at baptism and dwells in it to live the Christian life. In Paul’s writings, the Spirit has a fundamental role in discipleship: through the community, the Spirit calls one into faith to follow Jesus, to live and serve like Jesus, and thus to be saved for eternal life: “For if we have been united with him in death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Rom 6.5). This recalls the glory of God’s saving and transforming love that Jesus’ death and resurrection reveals as God’s beauty. Paul adds to this understanding the important role the Spirit plays in empowering the disciple to see, to experience, and to participate in this revelation.

Paul’s writings therefore emphasize that disciples come to know the faithfulness of God’s love for humankind through the Spirit. It is this Spirit that empowers them to know the truth of God’s saving love for all in Jesus: “in Christ God was reconciling (καταλλάσσων) the world to himself” (2 Cor 5.19). For Paul, then, God is for humankind and for their salvation: “God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Rom 5.8).

This is how disciples can have faith in God who saves through Jesus: “we know that a person is justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 2.16). Thus, a disciple’s faith in Jesus is really faith in the faithfulness of God who creates, redeems, and transforms humankind through Jesus’ faithful self-giving on the Cross. God’s faithfulness (πίστις) to humankind is another way of talking about God’s righteousness (δικαιοσύνη, Rom 3.3, 5). God’s righteousness is God’s love that saves, reconciles, and gives the fullness of life to all humankind in and through the faithfulness of Jesus, especially on the Cross. Paul explains: “But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ) through faith in Jesus Christ (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) for all who believe” (Rom 3.21-22a). Hence, God’s righteousness is the beauty of God that Jesus’ faithfulness reveals because it manifests the glory of God’s love in Jesus.

God’s faithful and righteous love is, moreover, inextricably bound up with God’s covenant fidelity. According to Thomas D. Stegman, God’s love “ultimately points to his covenantal impetus, out of love, to call and form a people—and to restore that relationship when his people have been unfaithful.”¹³⁶ For Paul, disciples come to know God’s covenant fidelity definitively in the faithfulness of Jesus: this is what it means to “be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one comes through the faithfulness of Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith” (Phil 3.8-9). In Paul’s letters, the phrase “faithfulness of Jesus” “denotes Jesus’ obedience to God’s plan to deal with the problem of sin through his death on the cross. Jesus’ obedience and faithfulness to God

¹³⁶ Thomas D. Stegman, “New Testament Portraits of Faith (5): Letters of Paul,” *The Pastoral Review* 9/6 (2013): 21.

are expressed through his self-giving love” that restores covenant relationship.¹³⁷

Covenant relationship speaks of communion, the manifestation of unity, participation, and fellowship between God and humankind. It is the faithfulness of Jesus, “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1.24), that brings about this covenant that sin had previously destroyed. More significantly, in Jesus, God’s righteousness attests to his fidelity to his covenant promise of redemption and communion: “For in him every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes’” (2 Cor 1.20). Paul teaches that God gives Jesus as the fulfillment of the gift of the Law to Israel, a gift bestowed so that they could enter into covenant relationship with God and become God’s holy people. Paul’s writings attest that Jesus is the full manifestation of God’s righteousness; he is the one who brings about a renewed covenant relationship between God and humankind:

For if we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Rom 5.10-11).

For our purposes, this renewed way of being in relationship with God that Paul writes about can be understood as the beauty of God’s faithful and righteous love breaking through sin and division.

For Paul, this covenant faithfulness of God’s righteous love that Jesus reveals is cruciform. Gorman proposes the term “cruciform” or “cross-shaped” to describe how Paul experiences God as revealed by Jesus: God is known and experienced in Jesus through what many regard as God’s “weakness”—dying on the Cross. Gorman explains: “God’s will and person are known through the cross of Jesus the Messiah and Lord,” and “cruciformity is the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 21.

character of God.”¹³⁸ For Gorman, God’s love is cruciform because God’s way of loving is conformed to the Cross, as much as Jesus’ way of living is conformed to God on the Cross.¹³⁹ Gorman speaks of conformity in terms of the “family resemblance” Jesus and God share.¹⁴⁰ This is why Paul will teach that imitation of Jesus is imitation of God’s cruciform love; and this is what disciples are called to do in living out Jesus’ commandment to go and do likewise (John 13.15). The next section will discuss this imitation as discipleship in greater depth.

To better appreciate what cruciform love is, we turn to Gorman’s discussion of Paul’s presentation of Jesus’ divinity and humanity in Phil 2.6-8.¹⁴¹ Most translations interpret this text thus: *although* Jesus was in the form of God, he did not exploit this status but rather emptied himself in the Incarnation to become human, and offered himself in self-giving for others on Cross, in obedience to God. Gorman argues that, while “although” is a possible rendering of the force of the participle *hyparchōn*, reading it as “because” captures better Paul’s meaning: Jesus, “*because* he was in the form of God” (*en morphē theou hyparchōn*, Phil 2.6), reveals the very nature of God in his self-giving, especially on the Cross. God’s essential attribute is therefore cruciform self-giving or *kenōsis*.¹⁴² This is the trinitarian reality of God’s very being: God is total and continuous self-giving love that always saves both humankind and the world God created so that they can be in life-giving communion with God again. Disciples witness this in Jesus’ self-giving on the Cross; there, they also see the self-giving nature of his divinity, which he always had, fully displayed. Gorman insists, therefore,

¹³⁸ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001), 18. For a discussion of cruciform nature of God, see *Cruciformity*, 9-18.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁴¹ Gorman presents a detailed discussion of Phil 2.6-8 in *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 9-39.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 27.

that the Cross is for Paul always “theophanic”: it is revelatory of the very nature of God “in the reality and narrative of the crucified Messiah.”¹⁴³

Gorman also reads the Christ-hymn in Philippians as revelatory of how humankind should authentically live: in faithful obedience to God’s will in order to give oneself to others. He singles out Paul’s presentation of the man-Jesus as “slave” (δοῦλος) to demonstrate this: “Christ’s death by crucifixion is for Paul a voluntary act of obedience, the culmination of a human life lived as a servant of God” to save others from sin.¹⁴⁴ This stance of self-giving, he argues, exemplifies how humankind should be in right relationship with God and among themselves. This is what cruciform love entails because the man-Jesus’ self-giving “was simultaneously an expression of his faithful obedience to God (i.e., love for God) and of his self-giving devotion to others (i.e., his love for neighbor).”¹⁴⁵ Gorman appreciates that Paul sees Jesus not only as the Messiah but also as the new Adam, whose obedience and humility are antithetical to Adam, the one who attempted to exalt himself in his disobedience to God (Gen 3.5-6).¹⁴⁶ As the new Adam, Jesus models for disciples what life can and should mean after the paschal event: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor 5.17).

As the new Adam (Rom 5.15-19), Jesus shows human beings how they can live authentically as “the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4.4b). Living an authentic human life manifests God’s beauty because the glory of Christ is the incarnate glory of God’s love. Gorman argues that one sees this in the faithfulness of Jesus to God and neighbor that led to his self-giving love. For him, Jesus’ self-giving expresses the

¹⁴³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴⁴ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 108.

¹⁴⁵ Michael J Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 584.

¹⁴⁶ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 63.

“quintessential *covenantal* act,” which is simultaneously “the quintessential *human* act” through which God reaches out to reconcile with humankind and to lift them up in redemption.¹⁴⁷ Jesus’ faithfulness, as Paul presents it in his letters, is rooted in his disposition of response-able love of God and neighbor that we have identified in John’s Gospel. His self-giving also attests to the eucharistic form that embodies his practice of faithfulness; this form embodies his obedient self-giving—as gift offering—to accomplish God’s will in faith and to give life to others in love that our dialogue with Balthasar on God’s beauty disclosed.

Understanding Jesus as the new Adam further illuminates how a spirituality of cruciform love is appropriate for following Jesus in a discipleship of beauty. To follow Jesus is to follow his faithfulness to love God in faith and to give himself to others in service. This is how Paul himself understands “the purpose of his apostolic call and ministry”: it is to bring about “the obedience of faith” (Rom 1.5; 16.26). This “captures well his fundamental understanding of *pistis*,” as Stegman argues:

While it is true that the life of faith involves *belief* in what God had done in and through Jesus, that is only the beginning of what Paul means by ‘faith’ or ‘faithfulness.’ The fullness of faith is marked by entering into the dynamic human existence revealed by Jesus, thereby becoming in him the Spirit-enabled manifestation of ‘the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor 5.21).¹⁴⁸

His observation emphasizes three Pauline insights for a spirituality of cruciform love that a disciple ought to embrace in order to live out a discipleship of beauty. First, following Jesus entails living out fully his obedient faithfulness to God and neighbor in one’s life and ministry. Such faithfulness involves self-giving fidelity to God and self-giving love for neighbor. Second, following Jesus entails embodying God’s faithful and righteous love that saves and reconciles in the world. In this way, a disciple takes on the very form of Jesus who

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 62. Italics are in the original.

¹⁴⁸ Stegman, “New Testament Portraits of Faith (5),” 22. Italics in the original.

manifests God's beauty in God's cruciform love. Discipleship is therefore a process of transformation that empowers a disciple to live an authentic human life. Third, and most importantly, following Jesus in his faithfulness to God is possible only through the gift of the Spirit of Jesus, who not only reveals God's righteousness for covenant relationship but *is* God's cruciform love that manifests God's beauty in the world (cf. Rom 5:5).

These Pauline insights are the "indicative" for living the Christian life and for doing discipleship because they reveal to disciples what faithful Jesus did for us: he died for us so as to liberate us into freedom for life with God (Gal 1.4; 5.1). They also reveal the gift to us of what faithful Jesus did: he shows us how to live cruciform love fully for God and neighbor. For Paul, these revelations of what Jesus did and the gift of what he gave invite disciples to live in Jesus' Spirit: "if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom 8.10-11). Thus, having been saved from sin and death by Jesus (the Pauline indicative), the Christian task Paul teaches is to live out Jesus' cruciform love in community by becoming "the righteousness of God" and bringing about the message of reconciliation in the world (2 Cor 5.18-21).

This Christian task Paul calls disciples to now challenges us to reflect on how they can "translate" this "indicative" to live the cruciform love into its practice as a discipleship of beauty to live the Christian life.

Cruciformity: living a Christ-like spirituality in a discipleship of beauty

This section answers the question, "How does one live out this spirituality of cruciform love in Christian life and ministry?" It focuses on Paul's teaching on imitating

Christ to respond to this question. Paul understands imitation of Christ in terms of “cruciformity.” According to Gorman, cruciformity is “an ongoing pattern of living in Christ and of dying with him that produces a Christ-like (cruciform) person.”¹⁴⁹ This section will show how a disciple can imbibe this spirituality and take on this pattern of living in the Spirit of Jesus, so as to follow Jesus to reveal God’s beauty as the glory of God’s love that saves, reconciles, and transforms humankind for renewed covenant relationship with God. For our purposes, the Spirit indwelling in disciples enables them to live out a discipleship of beauty, and also to be transformed to become more Christ-like by living his faith fully and selflessly to build up community. Such cruciformity is the “imperative” task in Christian discipleship (1 Cor 9.1-27; 2 Cor 4.7-15).

Paul explains what imitating Christ entails in Ephesians 5.1-2: “Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in the way of love, just as the Messiah loved us and gave himself up for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.” For Paul, to imitate Jesus is to imitate the way God loves, which is cruciform. In Jesus, then, “human beings now know how to imitate God by conducting themselves in love after the manner of Jesus’ loving self-offering” because he is, as Stegman observes, the “middle term” between God and humankind.¹⁵⁰

Paul himself models how disciples can make imitation their way of being a Jesus follower. He imitates Christ by taking on his cruciform way of living and serving. He humbles himself by working with his hands to proclaim the gospel freely (2 Cor 11.7). He sees his ministry of proclaiming the gospel as “servant ministry”; that is, he considers himself a slave at the service of the Corinthians (2 Cor 4.5), as well as God’s servant for the ministry and the

¹⁴⁹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 48-49.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas D. Stegman, “‘Run That You may Obtain the Prize’: Using St Paul as a Resource for the Spiritual Exercises,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 44/4 (2012): 18.

hardships that come with it (2 Cori 6.3-13). He also patterns his life on Jesus' self-giving for love of God and others (Phil 3.6-11). Indeed, Paul's writings attest that he wants to be one with Jesus in his life, death, and the resurrection: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his suffering by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3.7-11). In these ways, Paul presents himself as a model of the Jesus follower: "take me as your pattern, just as I take Christ for mine" (1 Cor 11.1).

More significantly, Paul's imitation manifests conformity to Christ in his cruciformity. According to Gorman, conformity to Christ involves being "apprehended" by Christ, that is, putting on Christ, or taking on the form of Christ: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal 3.27). Putting on Christ, Gorman argues further, is not a one-time event of imitating Christ; rather, it is "an experience of on-going death, of ongoing crucifixion" that Paul writes about as a believer's "identification with and participation in the death of Jesus," whose origins are in his "fundamental experience of Christ."¹⁵¹ Hence, a disciple is called in and through the Spirit to continually imitate Jesus' self-giving on the Cross. This imitation is eucharistic; it manifests nothing less than Jesus' self-offering in faith to God and in love for neighbor. This action characterizes the cruciform way of being a disciple and of revealing God's beauty.

Though Paul's spirituality of cruciform love for Christian life and service is rooted in the Cross, it must be lived out in the light of the Resurrection: "[We are] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies" (2 Cor 4.10). Thus, to live this spirituality of cruciform love is also to live with hope. This is a salvific spirituality, Paul insists: "For is we have been united with him in a death like his, we

¹⁵¹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 32.

will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his....So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6.5, 11). For Gorman, “Paul desires *cruciformity* as a prelude to bodily resurrection.”¹⁵² And this, Gorman adds, is the great Pauline paradox of being a Christian disciple: “one comes to know the power and glory of Christ, the resurrection and life of Christ, through cruciformity.”¹⁵³ A disciple comes to know resurrection life not only as an expectant advent to come. He progressively experiences this in the present as he follows Jesus: “all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3.18).

Thus, this spirituality of cruciform love not only empowers a disciple to live and serve like Christ in the present, but also promises him the eschatological hope of realizing his Christian vocation—that is, to be holy. Paul reminds Christians that this is their rightful identity when he addresses them as saints or holy ones (*hagioi*) in his letters (1 Cor 1.2; Phil 1.1; Col 1.2). For him, holiness is progressive conformation to Christ. Living out a spirituality of cruciform love slowly but surely empowers a disciple to realize the holiness of growing into the likeness of Christ that he comes to resemble through a life of discipleship. For Gorman, this conformation is “a nonnegotiable mandate in which one does not deny but rather exercises one’s true identity as an apostle (and one’s true apostolic freedom), or, more generally, one’s identity (and true freedom) as a ‘Christian.’”¹⁵⁴ Gorman’s insight affirms this thesis’ initial observation in Chapter 1 that discipleship is best understood in terms of virtue ethics, which is based on following the person of Jesus. With Paul, we see that to embrace and

¹⁵² Ibid., 35.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵⁴ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 23.

to live out the spirituality of cruciform love that Jesus revealed in and through his faithfulness is the right and just ethical response a disciple ought to make upon hearing Jesus' call to follow him as the form of God's beauty. To act in this way is to act "*in* character, not *out* of character" as a Jesus follower.¹⁵⁵ To choose otherwise negates one's right to becoming Christ-like and holy. It also diminishes the authenticity of one's human existence. Both these choices prevent one from living in the Spirit of cruciformity, and following Jesus faithfully. Hence, to live in the Spirit is the cruciform way in Christian life and ministry of ethically loving God and neighbor response-ably, like Jesus, and of ethically embodying his eucharistic form of self-giving love. This is why a discipleship of beauty must be rooted in virtue ethics (the person of Jesus as the form of God's beauty) and orientated towards ethical outcomes for the community's wellbeing (reconciliation, fellowship, and communion as manifestations of God's beauty).

Paul's letters present the promise of living in the Spirit: to be conformed to Christ in terms of mutual indwelling, that is, of a disciple allowing the Spirit of God to dwell in him as he also dwells in the Spirit: "you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Rom 8.9). This mutual indwelling, in turn, empowers him to "indwell" in the Body of Christ that the community also is. In this way, his life and ministry witness to God's presence in the community. This is because the Spirit "imprints" him with the cruciform pattern of God's righteous love that the faithfulness of Jesus reveals. Hence, Paul teaches: "Since we are living by the Spirit, let our behavior, be guided by the Spirit" (Gal 5.25). For Paul, such a discipleship in the Spirit is about living "*in* Christ and *with* Christ," and ultimately, it is about living "*for* Christ."¹⁵⁶ In his letters, Paul offers three ways to show how living in the Spirit

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵⁶ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 47. Italics in the original.

can empower the disciple to live this spirituality of cruciform love; each, in turn, is foundational to practicing a discipleship of beauty.

First, to live in the Spirit is to live as God's new creation in the here and now. For Paul, this reality is evidenced by the fact that Christians now live in restored covenant relationship with God and with one another because of Jesus' salvific action. He assures the Romans of this in his letter to them: they can indeed abide in this salvific reality and live their faith out of it. He reminds them how God's righteousness manifested by Jesus' faithfulness has redeemed them from slavery to sin; moreover, they are adopted as God's children into whom the Spirit of Jesus has been poured into their hearts, enabling them to cry "Abba, Father!" (Rom 8.14-15). They can enjoy the love of God's salvation in this restored communion they have with God, in Jesus, and through his Spirit. In this communion, they can also be assured that the Spirit is life-giving: the Spirit helps them to be strong in their weakness, to pray when they cannot find the right words, and to orientate their lives according to the mind of God (Rom 8.26-27). But Paul also warns the Romans that they can only enjoy this communion if they are prepared to embrace Jesus' self-giving way of living, loving and serving. This involves living out fully and faithfully the spirituality of cruciform love: for "it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom 8.16-17).

To live in the Spirit in this way is to live with faith in Christ in a discipleship of beauty. It is this faith in Jesus as the form of God's beauty that enables a disciple to see and to experience the beauty of God in Jesus. A disciple can do this, Paul teaches, by letting the Word of God dwell in him richly because it will guide and order how one lives in right

relationship with God and one another (Col 3.16-17). This Pauline teaching recalls and deepens the Johannine virtue of dynamic hospitality that we discussed in Chapter 1. As much as this virtue enables Jesus to abide in God, it also enables a disciple to welcome, receive, and abide in Jesus, God's Word, through whom he also abides in the love of God the Father. What undergirds a disciple's practice of this way of being in relationship with God is the faithfulness of Jesus to abide in God, specifically, in God's cruciform love.

Second, to live in the Spirit is to be empowered to continue Jesus' mission of proclaiming the goodness, truth, and beauty of God's saving love. According to Gorman, Paul's spirituality of cruciform love shows how "the past 'work' of God's Son, embodied on the cross, has become the present work of the *Spirit* of God's Son, embodied in the believer and in the community."¹⁵⁷ The Spirit also dwells in the disciple in order to lead him onward into a life of self-giving service to and for the community. Paul's letter to the Galatians illustrates this. Paul instructs them to live selfless lives of service to build up the community: "do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another" (Gal 5.13b). For Paul, the Spirit bestows the fruit of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control" onto Jesus' followers to live selfless lives. These attributes are in fact the very attributes of Jesus' life and ministry; they present the portrait of who Jesus is and what he does. For Paul, disciples come to resemble this Jesus portrait because living and serving in the Spirit transforms a disciple's human spirit to make it more and more Christ-like. This is the promised family resemblance disciples take on in Spirit. This happens in the context of a disciple's community that "schools" and perfects his practice of living the cruciform way of life. The Spirit is the way to salvation and holiness, according to Paul: "For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly await

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 58. Italics are in the original.

for the hope of righteousness” (Gal 5.5). It is the Spirit, then, that will convert the Galatians from their self-centered ways that denature their humanity and divide the community; the Spirit will empower them to live selfless lives for the sake of others (Gal 5.16-24). Paul reminds them that the Spirit is outpoured on them as gift in and through Christ’s love, death, and indwelling (Gal 2.19-20). Moreover, their experience of the Spirit working miracles in their community (Gal 3.2-5) must call them, in turn, to “work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith” (Gal 6.10).

To live in the Spirit in this way is to love the community with Christ. In a discipleship of beauty, this means loving others with the love of Jesus; this is how disciples follow Jesus to reveal God’s beauty to the community. This entails serving the community, especially those most in need. A disciple can do this, Paul urges, by putting on the love of Christ (Col 3.1-7) and serving one another with Christ-like self-giving love (Gal 5.13). This Pauline encouragement brings to mind the Johannine virtue of selfless loving that we discussed in Chapter 1. This virtue is marked by selflessness. A disciple practices this reaching out to another, putting him before oneself, and striving to help him live life more fully. This virtue enables disciples to serve with the self-giving love of Jesus. Paul’s encouragement affirms that Jesus’ response-able love for God and neighbor cannot be practiced in God’s life-giving ways except in Jesus’ eucharistic form of self-giving in faith to God and in love for the life of others. This self-emptying distinguishes the cruciform love Jesus lived in order to give others life: “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8.9). A disciple can only imitate this through the empowerment of the Spirit of cruciform love. It is

by living in this Spirit that a disciple can practice a discipleship that can manifest God's beauty.

Third, to live in the Spirit is to witness to "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4.6). This glory is God's saving, reconciling, and transforming love; it is also God's beauty. This is what Jesus' mission reveals. He calls his disciples to go and do likewise in word and deed, through transformed lives they live in the Spirit. Paul encourages the Corinthians to undertake this same mission for the sake of their community in his second (canonical) letter to them: "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4.5). Paul's use of "Lord," a title associated with the Spirit, suggests that he understands the glory of God in Jesus to also be the promised glory of what those who live and serve in his Spirit will become.¹⁵⁸ For Paul:

the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor 17-18).

Hence, disciples participate in God's glory that Jesus reveals by walking in his footsteps in life and ministry. This is how they will "be gradually transformed by the Spirit into the image of Christ, the image of God (2 Cor 3.18)" that Jesus is.¹⁵⁹ For Gorman, 2 Cor 3:17-18 is Paul's description of "the process of becoming holy, of becoming like Christ and thus like God."¹⁶⁰ Disciples become holy by living in the cruciform love of the Spirit in whom they are "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible" in him, Paul teaches (2 Cor 4.10). In terms of mission, a disciple's Christ-like life then testifies to the transforming power of life in the Spirit through whom God saves: "So, if

¹⁵⁸ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 120.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor 5.17). This is the Christian hope a disciple can proclaim to the community.

To live and serve in the Spirit in this way is to live for Christ, that is, to live in accordance with his cruciform way so that one is the bearer of God’s Good News for others:¹⁶¹ “[Christ] died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” (2 Cor 5.15). This is why it is important to appreciate Paul’s insight that Christians are “earthen vessels” to be constantly filled with, formed by, and renewed in the Spirit only to be sent forth to proclaim Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4.7-17). Paul reminds us that it is by living in the Spirit of cruciform love that disciples can be Christ-like, and so truly proclaim God’s saving love in Jesus to be God’s beauty. Their proclamation is distinguished by the self-giving fidelity of Jesus to accomplish God’s will and the self-giving love of Jesus to give life to humankind. This is the only way he can become a true disciple of Jesus. In a discipleship of beauty, this means that disciples are to live out Jesus’ way of response-ably loving God and neighbor and to practice following his eucharistic form of self-giving love. For Paul, Jesus provides the pattern for disciples to live self-giving lives that build up the community and glorify God:

We who are strong ought to put up the failings of the weak, and not please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself; but as it is written, ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’.... May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 15.1-3, 5-6)

This is only possible when a disciple takes on Jesus’ obedient faithfulness that is at the heart of his cruciform love. This calls to mind the Johannine virtue of fruitful obedience Chapter 1

¹⁶¹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 47.

discussed. This virtue is for glorifying God to others by obediently fulfilling God's will for the good of others. This is why a disciple will only truly manifest God's beauty when the response-able love of Jesus he follows is first and foremost rooted in his own "obedience of faith" (Rom 1.5). For Paul, a disciple realizes this obedience when he comes to know the will of God he must obey. As a follower of Jesus, he learns that this means taking on in his life and service Jesus' eucharistic self-giving, which Paul teaches is a daily sacrifice to God: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship," and "be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12.1-2).¹⁶² In this way, disciples witness to the community how to live in covenant relationship with God, and through this, in right relationship with one another. They demonstrate, then, how putting on the mind of Christ, who is faithful and obedient, empowers them to become "ambassadors for Christ" in the community (2 Cor 5.20-21)

In the process of explaining how disciples can live out Paul's spirituality of cruciform love by imitating Jesus' cruciform life and ministry, the role of community has surfaced several times. It is to Paul's teaching on the community's role in cruciform disciples that we now turn.

Embodying cruciform love: God's beauty as *koinōnia*

This section answers the question, "How and in what way does a community experience the revelation of God's beauty by a disciple who lives a spirituality of cruciform love?" It describes this experience of God's beauty to be the *koinōnia* or fellowship a

¹⁶² For Gorman, obedience is key to a believer's transformation in the Spirit. See *Cruciformity*, 131-147.

community has when its myriad members reconcile their differences to form one body in Christ.

This event of *koinōnia* enfleshes the reality of “unity-in-diversity” that a community can be when its different members strive towards sharing in communion, instead of competing to divide. *Koinōnia* especially manifests “the reconciliation that God has accomplished through Jesus’ death and resurrection,” and embodies the new covenant God has effected to overcome “the alienation between God and human beings (Eph 2.1-10), as well as that between human beings themselves (Eph 2.11-22).”¹⁶³ *Koinōnia* manifests God’s beauty, and the community experiences it in three distinct yet interrelated ways. First, being saved from separation by God’s righteousness working through Jesus. Second, being reconciled into communion with God and one another. Third, being transformed into the likeness of Jesus who shares family resemblance with God.

For Paul, a community experiences God’s beauty when Christians embrace the call to be a “minister of a new covenant” (2 Cor 3.6) and to practice “the ministry of reconciliation” to build up this renewed covenant community (2 Cor 5.18). The Spirit of Jesus’ cruciform love in their lives and service empowers them to bring about unity while valuing diversity, which is the community’s experience of God’s beauty. They accomplish this because the Spirit enables them to overcome their own divisions and be reconciled as a renewed covenant community with God and each other. Thus, this section will reflect on 1 Corinthians 12-13 to demonstrate how disciples can “enflesh” God’s beauty in the community.

First Corinthians 12-13 is located in the second half of the letter where Paul responds to questions the Corinthians have about Christian life and faith (1 Cor 7.1-16.4). In particular, these chapters are part of Paul’s response to how they ought to conduct themselves as a

¹⁶³ Stegman, “New Testament Portraits of Faith (5),” 23.

worshiping assembly (11.2-14.40). His teaching is a response, at least in part, to the disunity arising from the neglectfulness of poorer believers by their richer brethren when celebrating the Lord's Supper (11.17-34). For Paul, division is contrary to the spirit and form of *koinōnia*. In these chapters, he teaches the Corinthians about the importance of a unified yet diverse church, and of realizing this with the love of God. This is an important theme in 1 Corinthians; it reiterates and builds on Paul's initial appeal that the Corinthians be united in mind and purpose, and not divided among themselves (1.10-12). Paul also makes this same call for unity-in-diversity or communion to other Christian communities, like those in Rome and Colossae, who struggle with divisions. He insists on communion because it is the saving grace against division.

For Paul, communion is the way to grow into holiness; it enables disciples to become saints and nurtures the community to live in fellowship with God in Christ: "God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of the Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord" (1 Cor 1.2, 9). It is significant that Paul placed these chapters within a discussion of worship, particularly the celebration of Eucharist (which he calls the "Lord's Supper"—11.20). These chapters express Paul's encouragement to the Christian community to reorder themselves into right and loving relationships with God and one another, and in these ways to become a living witness of the body of Christ to all (1 Cor 11.2-14.40). But, as Stegman notes, a community of faith cannot authentically engage "the work of proclaiming to others God's reconciliation" unless it first attends "to the ongoing need for reconciliation within."¹⁶⁴ This is why Paul "continually admonishes and exhorts communities he founded to rid themselves of dissension and to strive for unity (e.g. 1 Cor 1.10; Phil 2.1-4)."¹⁶⁵ Restored covenant relationship is the unity that

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 24.

God's righteous love working through the faithfulness of Jesus realizes in the world. Paul calls the Corinthians to grow into and to express this unity, which will bear testimony to the beauty of God's saving, reconciling, and transforming love. Paul's call for unity is also a call to make God's beauty real in community. In 1 Corinthians 12-13, Paul teaches that this can be accomplished when disciples use their particular charisms in the Spirit to bring about and to build up communion.

First Corinthians 12 begins with Paul's thesis that the church is one community composed of different individuals. He illustrates this point by comparing the community to the human body in three ways. First, he states that no one body part makes up the body; it is a unity of the various parts (1 Cor 12.14). Second, he discusses how all the different parts—feet, hands, ears, eyes, the nose—are all needed for the well-being of the body. No part can say, "I do not belong" (12.16). Third, no part is any less important than another in itself; to substitute one for all negates what it means to be body. He reiterates this when he argues that each part needs the other to build up and care for one another (12.25-26). By comparing the human body to the body of Christ, Paul provides the Corinthians with a concrete image to appreciate their unity as church. This unity is founded on the fellowship of Jesus into whose body they have been individually baptized into (1.9). This unity that Christians share with Jesus in the Spirit is also a participation in the communion Jesus shares with God. Paul's comparison, moreover, complements his earlier teaching to them that the church is the *koinōnia* they experience when celebrating the Lord's Supper. This is because the Eucharist institutes and forms them in their diversity as the body of Christ (10.16-17). In these ways, Paul prepares the Corinthians to appreciate how his teaching about the church's unity-in-diversity can be for them the experience of God's beauty in their midst.

Paul now telescopes the image of the body of Christ for the Corinthians onto their lived reality as church. Though it is ethnically and socio-economically diverse, they are “to form one body.” He returns their gaze onto this vision of oneness so that they can remember, believe in, and live out of the reality of this unity, which their baptism in the one Spirit and their drinking of the same Spirit calls them to as church. He thus encourages the Corinthians to reclaim the experience of *koinōnia*, of solidarity and fellowship with God and one another in Christ (1 Corinthians 10.16-21). In this way, they can overcome their divisions, the result of quarrels among themselves about allegiances (1.1-13) and of unequal treatment at the Lord’s Supper (11.18-22). For Paul, this is how disciples can experience and celebrate their communal identity in Christ by experiencing God’s righteous love that saves, reconciles, and transforms them. This is an experience of God’s beauty in their life with Christ.

According to Paul, this experience of God’s beauty as the community’s unity-in-diversity is enabled because the Spirit empowers disciples to live out their charisms for the common good. First Corinthians 12-13 begins with Paul’s teaching about the variety of gifts that originate in the one God, in whose Spirit these are dispensed individually to build up the community (1 Corinthians 12.1-11). His teaching provides three insights into how disciples do this in the Spirit. First, they come to value and promote the weaker and lesser as indispensable members of the community’s unity (12.19-26). Second, they can affirm and celebrate that each person is an integral member of this body of Christ, and gifted with different charisms to build it up (12.27-31). Third, they embrace Jesus’ mission to foster unity and overcome division by exercising their charisms in self-giving love to bring about God’s reconciliation (13:1-13). Together, these attest that it is the Spirit working through the disciples who brings about reconciliation and solidarity in the community; the Spirit makes

the body, with its many parts, one: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (12.13). For Paul, the Spirit both preserves particularity and promotes unity because in Christ “all things hold together” (Col 1.17). This echoes Paul’s teaching to the Galatians: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female” in the *koinōnia* “for all...are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3.28). More significantly, the Spirit empowers the Corinthians to share their charisms in the more excellent way of love (13:1-13), which is in itself “an antidote for their self-centered and self-destructive behavior.”¹⁶⁶ By emphasizing the role of the Spirit at work in the Corinthians, Paul teaches that following Jesus must always be about following him in his Spirit of cruciform love. The Spirit empowers a disciple to have the faithfulness of Jesus so as to response-ably love God in obedience and neighbor in selflessness. In addition, he can practice this love in the form Jesus calls his disciples to live—the eucharistic giving of oneself back to God, and, like Christ, in loving service of others. These then are the ways living a spirituality of cruciform love can enable a disciple to practice a discipleship of beauty.

Living a cruciform life in the Spirit—that foundational manner of living, interacting with, and worshipping as the one and diverse body of Christ—is how disciples come to enable a community to experience God’s beauty. More significantly, their way of living in the Spirit imbues the community with this same cruciform life so that it can then witness as God’s beauty to other communities. For Paul, God’s beauty has the form of communion, of sharing the love of God as Christ’s body in the Spirit (Col 1.8). Stegman’s understanding of the metaphor of the “Christ body” (σῶμα Χριστοῦ) that Paul uses to describe the communion the church is supports this claim:

¹⁶⁶ Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 273.

The *ekklēsia* as the unified-in-diversity ‘body of Christ’ has a special vocation vis-à-vis the world. Not only is the community of believers to mediate the ongoing presence of Christ in space and time. The family of faith is also to bear witness to ‘the plan of the mystery’ of ‘God’s manifold wisdom’ (Eph 3.9–10). The term ‘mystery’ refers here to the divine plan ‘to unite all things’ in Christ (Eph 1.10).¹⁶⁷

As God’s handiwork, the church as the communion of unity-in-diversity is the manifestation of God’s beauty a community is empowered to show forth. This is how a community reveals God’s beauty to other communities—and to the world. The community experiences God’s beauty when it can accept both the strong and the weak among them and celebrate their hierarchically varied charisms as fruitful for the same mission (1 Cor 12.22-30). In this way, they witness to the love of God that brings all into communion with God and with one another, a communion distinguished not by dissension amongst themselves but by genuine care for each other so that their burdens and joys are truly shared (1 Cor 12.25-26). This is why Paul challenges the Corinthians, and all disciples, to exercise their gifts for the common good in the more excellent way of love because love is the authentic and Christ-like way of being that communion, the body of Christ (1 Cor 13:1-13).

Finally, Paul’s challenge is nothing less than a call to realize one’s authentic identity as a disciple: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members with it” (1 Cor 12.27). A disciple can only attain the fullness of Christian identity in and through the community: “just as the body is one and has many parts... so it with Christ... all are baptized into the one body” (1 Cor 12.12-13). This identity is therefore a Christian’s rightful inheritance to be “coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Jesus Christ through the gospel” (Eph 3.6).

To conclude: Paul’s writings offer a three-part “blueprint” for disciples to accomplish a discipleship of beauty by living out a spirituality of cruciform love. Chapter 3 has

¹⁶⁷ Stegman, “New Testament Portraits of Faith (5),” 23.

demonstrated this by describing what a spirituality of God's cruciform love is, by showing how it can be lived out it to follow Jesus in revealing God's beauty in the world, and by explaining what the experience of God's beauty can be in community. It has also paid attention to how living this spirituality of cruciform love transforms a disciple more into Christ-likeness in his life and ministry. In these ways, Chapter 3 attests that it is possible for today's disciples to follow Jesus even if he is no longer physically present by living in his Spirit. It therefore confirms that a discipleship of beauty is possible and credible.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued for a discipleship of beauty. This is what Christian discipleship can also be when one follows Jesus as the revealer and the revelation of God's beauty. Three aspects characterize this discipleship. First, it is about following Jesus in the way he is as the form of God's beauty. Second, it involves appreciating and proclaiming God's beauty to be the glory of God's cruciform or kenotic love Jesus is in saving, reconciling, and transforming humankind for covenant relationship. Third, it is about living in the Spirit of Jesus' cruciform love to embody and to enact God's beauty in the world. Together, they describe what a discipleship of beauty is about.

Our study has demonstrated that it is possible to envision this manner of discipleship through the theological category of Beauty, in particular, of following Jesus as the objective revelation of who God is and what God does. It has developed a portrait of following Jesus in this way over three chapters, and in conversation with John, Balthasar and Paul.

Using John's Gospel, this thesis raised the possibility of thinking about a discipleship of beauty in Chapter 1. This is a possibility disciples must consider because in encountering the crucified and risen Jesus, who reveals the glory of God's saving and transforming love, they encounter him who reveals this truth and goodness about God to also be God's beauty. Jesus reveals God's beauty through the life of response-able loving he lives. Response-able loving is Jesus' way of abiding in God with faithfulness and of accomplishing God's will in obedience, especially on the Cross. This is also his faith-filled way of serving others by living a life of self-giving love so that they might have life to the full. Jesus' way of response-ably loving God and neighbor teaches disciples that faithfulness to relationship is at the heart of a discipleship of beauty. Response-able loving is therefore a foundational way of following

Jesus to reveal God's beauty.

Engaging the work of Balthasar, this study developed this possibility of a discipleship of beauty in Chapter 2. It identified three elements to describe the makeup of this discipleship: perceiving God's beauty in Jesus; proclaiming God's beauty that Jesus reveals; and taking on Jesus' eucharistic way of loving God and neighbor to reveal God's beauty. These elements are constitutive of how a disciple lives out a discipleship of beauty. They are theologically grounded in the following insights from Balthasar's theology. First, disciples can see and participate in God's beauty because Jesus, whom they follow, is its revelatory form. Second, they come to know the truth and goodness of God's beauty to be the kenotic or self-giving love of the triune God that saves and transforms humankind for communion in Jesus, especially in his exaltation on the Cross and in the Resurrection. This is the Good News a discipleship of beauty must proclaim. Third, they come to know that Jesus' eucharistic form is the especial revelation of the God's beauty. This Christ-like form is characterized by one's self-offering to God in order to give life to others; this reveals not only the depth of God's saving love but also the richness of God's beauty. This form is, moreover, the salvific hope a discipleship of beauty promises; that is, to follow Jesus as the form of God's beauty is to be transformed into his eucharistic likeness that always manifests the beauty of God's love. These ways teach disciples that Jesus' eucharistic form must be the paradigmatic pattern to live out a discipleship of beauty; it not only reveals who God is and who God created us to become, but also enables disciples to en flesh the Christ-like form Jesus is as God's beauty.

Drawing on the letters of Paul, this thesis demonstrated that it is possible to practice a discipleship of beauty in Chapter 3. The latter analysis complements and builds on the previous chapters and, more importantly, confirms the argument this study makes for

following Jesus as the form of God's beauty. It showed how this discipleship is best practiced when disciples live out a spirituality of God's cruciform love. They witness this spirituality in Jesus' life of self-giving that manifests God's beauty by conforming to God on the Cross, as much as God's way of loving is conformed to the Christ-like way of self-giving the Cross. Living out this spirituality empowers disciples to proclaim God's beauty to a community as the experience of *koinōnia*. They bring about this experience when they overcome their differences and share their charisms to build up the common good. This event of God's beauty recalls the beauty of God's righteousness that saves and transforms by bringing about reconciliation through Jesus' faithfulness on the Cross to God's will so that all might have life to the full; this is the beauty of God's cruciform love. Disciples who live out this spirituality to practice a discipleship of beauty are also transformed; they become more Christ-like in embodying God's beauty. This Christ-likeness, his cruciform way of loving and serving to proclaim God, is the authentic identity disciples come to have when they imbibe and live out this spirituality. Enacting and embodying God's beauty entails living in the Spirit of God's cruciform love. To live in this Spirit is therefore to follow Jesus according to the self-giving manner of his cruciform love. This is thus the appropriate spirituality to practice a discipleship of beauty: it empowers a disciple to manifest God's beauty in community by fully living out Jesus' response-able love for God and neighbor that we witnessed in John's Gospel, as well as by embodying his eucharistic form of self-giving love that Balthasar's theology identified. Together, these empower disciples to accomplish the task of a discipleship of beauty, which is to bring about God's beauty through self-giving love that promotes reconciliation and fellowship in the community.

This thesis has also argued for a discipleship of beauty to enrich how Christian

discipleship is traditionally understood. The latter has the form of either proclaiming the truth of God or enacting the goodness of God. In a discipleship of beauty, however, one experiences, participates in, and proclaims God's beauty by following Jesus as the form of God's beauty. It is by following Jesus in this way and by living in his Spirit of cruciform love that a disciple comes to know that God is not only true and good but also beautiful. This complements our knowledge of God and our proclamation of who God is and what God does. Encountering God's beauty in Jesus in a discipleship of beauty also leads disciples to live and serve in a different manner. By living and serving according to the likeness of Jesus' distinctive way of incarnating and revealing God's beauty, they take on his form of embodying God's beauty and of revealing it to the others and to the world as Jesus did, through lives of self-giving love.

The discipleship of beauty our study proposes is an initial attempt at sketching out what it can possibly be. It hopes to encourage others to pursue further theological reflection on following Jesus as the revealer and the revelation of God's beauty. One approach could be to use this study in contextual theology. An example of this would be the work of Robert Goizueta in *Christ our Companion: Towards a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation*.¹⁶⁸ Goizueta explores how liberation theology can appropriate the crucified and risen Jesus as the form of God's beauty to re-interpret the bodies of the marginalized and discriminated, such as Latino/as and women. His objective is to show that they are also inscribed with the glory of God's saving love, and so invite Christians to work towards liberating those who suffer from the violence of stereotyping. Another approach could be to use this study to reflect on the intersection between Christian thought and life. An example of this would be *The Beauty of*

¹⁶⁸ Robert Goizueta, *Christ our Companion: Towards a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation* (New York: Orbis, 2009).

the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth by David Bentley Hart,¹⁶⁹ who reflects on beauty as an indispensable category for Christians to know the truth of God. According to Hart, Jesus reveals this truth to be the salvific work of the triune God who bridges the separation between humankind and God to bring about communion. His work invites believers to reflect on their discipleship in terms of reconciliation and re-creating God's beauty. This study could also enrich biblical studies by inviting reflection on Jesus' proclamation of the Reign of God as the inbreaking of God's beauty and on its implications for how disciples are to attend to the "God-moments" in their life as theophanies of God's beauty.

Finally, the hope of this study is to help disciples to better live their Christian faith in today's community. Divisions and differences, brought about by opposing views on gender, race, religion, politics, gender, and sexuality—to name a few—mark the daily struggles of many communities. In such communities, disciples struggle to live, to proclaim, and to fulfill the Christian message of fellowship with God and with one another. The discipleship of beauty this thesis proposes can help them overcome these struggles because it aims to realize the Reign of God, which is the event of communion that Jesus reveals to be the beauty of the trinitarian love of God. Following Jesus, disciples can realize this communion with lives of self-giving or kenotic love that reconciles divisions, fosters relationships, and brings about solidarity and fellowship. In this way, they follow Jesus in his faithfulness of loving God and neighbor response-ably by taking on the eucharistic life, living it fully in the Spirit of cruciform love. By realizing communion, disciples diminish the divide between God and humankind, and among peoples. In this event of *koinōnia*, all can find themselves in the beauty of God's love as communion. This is how the discipleship of beauty we have proposed

¹⁶⁹ Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*.

hopes to inspire disciples to follow Jesus, the form of God's beauty, with faith. It is a meaningful practice of following Jesus we contend to proclaim God's beauty in love. And it can encourage disciples to live and to persevere in the Spirit we believe because this is a discipleship that orientates them in hope towards the beauty of salvation in God.

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