

## Most Improved Disciple

**Intro.** After a sports season or school year is over, there are honors and awards for the highest score, the most valuable, and my favorite - the most improved. I got one of those for our college seminary basketball team. I wasn't sure it was a compliment. We did have two former all-state players on our team so I guess any improvement on my part was obvious. [NB: Ignore this-I *did* have a twenty-point game once.] The most improved award recognizes hard work and dedication, not necessarily talent.

**I.** We hear more instructions to the apostles preparing to go on the road as messengers of Christ. We just honored Mothers and Fathers. Was that wrong? He the Lord mean that by loving father or mother *more* than him, shows we are not worthy of

him? Well, yes. But it was hyperbole, an exaggeration to make a point. The Father gave us the fourth commandment; the Son wasn't taking it back. He was preparing the apostles for the mission and wanted to get their attention about the **focus** of their work. To be good disciples means not letting anything or sometimes *anyone* distract from preaching the message of healing and forgiveness.

Clay County resident and Olympic swimmer, Caeleb Dressel, is an example of focus on the mission. He and his family gave up much to accomplish his goals. This week he qualified in three events for the world championships in Budapest next year. This is a fairly common story but not just for athletes also for musicians, medical people, mechanics, and anyone who has talent, perseverance, and most of all

*a commitment to a goal.* Behind the honors and awards is also a lot of hard work.

**Concl.** Where are the gold medals for outstanding *disciples*? There have been more than a few.

Thursday our church celebrated as saints the Apostles Peter and Paul, probably the greatest disciples of all time. Billy Graham is another world class disciple who has a long career serving Christ. Some of you will remember one of the first *Catholics* to be a superstar: Archbishop Fulton Sheen who had his own radio and television shows in the forties and fifties. There are other disciples who distinguish themselves in the Lord's work today. But most disciples and missionaries work quietly in neighborhoods and towns, unknown except to those who are served by them. They proclaim the gospel of the Lord by starting medical

clinics and volunteering at food pantries and clothes closets. They make prayer blankets and pray for people who are sick. There is no real "Disciples Hall of Fame." But there is the "reward" the Lord talked about at the end of today's gospel. **This is the only award we really want. It is difficult to stay focused on being the best disciple. With the same kind of focus we see in other dedicated people, we have a chance to be a Most Improved Disciple this week.**