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REFLECTIONS

MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

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Jesus Calls Us as Missionary Disciples

When Jesus invited his early disciples to “Come, and you will see” (John 1:39), he set the pattern for all succeeding followers. In accepting the call to follow him, his first believers put into motion Jesus’ continuing plan for salvation.

It wasn’t long before his command, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature,” bore fruit (Mark 16:15). Early evangelists went to every corner of the known world and announced the Good News that Jesus is the Son of God who won salvation for humankind by his life, Death, and Resurrection. They were the first missionary disciples and evangelizers.

This pattern continues today. In every time and place, Jesus invites his disciples to “come and see.” He welcomes us into a personal relationship with him—a gift offered to every baptized believer who professes Jesus as Lord. Through our Baptism, we join the millions of saints and sinners through the ages who form the Church community. In so doing, we accept our calling to communicate his Good News. The Holy Spirit challenges us as today’s evangelizers to show the same missionary zeal that inspired saints like Peter, Paul, Francis, and Teresa of Calcutta.

Because followers of Jesus are sent to proclaim his Good News, Pope Francis refers to “a Church that goes forth” as a community of missionary disciples (*Evangelii Gaudium* 19). As such, every baptized Christian is called to fulfill Jesus’s missionary mandate.



The field of this missionary activity may include places where God's Word, once preached, is no longer active. It also exists with individuals who were baptized and heard the Word of God, but no longer practice their faith. We often run into Catholics, active in their faith, who strive to deepen it and share it with their students and colleagues. We can exercise our call as missionary disciples at home, in our families, in our neighborhoods, in parishes, in Catholic schools, or wherever we celebrate our faith.

Looking at our work as that of missionary disciples positively influences how we approach life and reach out to others. To enhance our efforts to communicate God's Word, there are many books, digital resources, and other products at our disposal that faithfully and accurately reflect the teachings of Jesus and the Church. It is our privilege and responsibility to share them with the broader society.

Believing in our role as missionary disciples makes it easier for us to show the zeal and enthusiasm that comes from the conviction that we are called by the Holy Spirit to invite others to follow Christ's way. Our positive attitude toward faith helps children, youth, and adults recognize and follow Jesus as Lord.

QUESTION

What are the implications for us as individuals and family members when we regard ourselves as missionary disciples in our life and work?