

# 5

## REFLECTIONS

# MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

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### *Evangelizing Discipleship in Today's Culture*

Missionary disciples know the importance of learning the ways and speaking the language of those they evangelize. Ways of acting and thought patterns are deeply influenced by the culture that initially forms us. The cultures from which we spring contain deeply imbedded values, beliefs, and teachings that become part of us. If our cultural upbringing is Hispanic, our ways of thinking and acting are shaped by the teachings, rituals, and symbols of our culture. The same is true if we live in a city or rural area. As Pope Francis says, "It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, #69).

After Jesus sent his disciples into the world to announce the Good News of the Kingdom, the New Testament indicates how they incorporated Jesus' teaching into the cultures they evangelized. Among other places, we find this in the Matthew's Gospel, written primarily for Jewish converts. This Gospel stresses that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament about the coming of a Messiah. We see something similar in the life and writings of St. Paul. He insisted that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised or observe Jewish dietary restrictions.

The Risen Lord continues to live in the Church. The community of believers is encouraged to be sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who inspires the Church to devise new and more effective ways to proclaim the Good News, while remaining true to Jesus' authentic message contained in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. In this way,



individuals and cultures are continually transformed by the revealed Word. This ongoing process of incorporation and transformation in a cultural context is at the heart of evangelization.

The implications of cultural adaptation are profound. As missionary disciples, committed to our task of sharing the Good News, we strive to live our lives in a way that is consistent with Jesus' teaching, thereby setting a positive example for those we meet.

We need to know Jesus' teachings and how they can inspire families and individuals. This is true in all cultures especially the Hispanic and Asian cultures, and in the digital world, which is central to the lives of all people of all ages. Without strong efforts to address today's needs, God's living Word will not be adequately proclaimed.

## QUESTION

**How can we link Jesus' authentic message with the needs of contemporary families, students, adults, and the digital world?**