

DISCIPLES IN MISSION **Embracing Evangelization**

Jesus is the good news of salvation for people of every race and nation, every language and culture. He passes on to his disciples in every age the mission which he received from the Father. To each of us he says: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

Jesus saw himself anointed for mission by the Spirit, and the missionary mandate is a sending forth in the Spirit. He is addressing us when he says:

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always (Mt 28:19-20).

Go out to all the world and tell the good news (Mk 16:15).

The mission of the Church is a participation in the mission of Jesus. He stated clearly: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6).

- Every human being needs Jesus because there is no other **way** to true liberation except through opening ourselves to his love in which alone we are set free from the power of darkness, evil, sin and death; there is no other way to be reconciled to God. Therefore, revealing God’s love for us made manifest in Jesus is a service by the Church to all members of the human race; it is our mission.
- Jesus is the definitive self-revelation of God, the human face of God, in whom alone is found the fullness of **truth** about God, about man and about the meaning of life itself. Consequently, our mission is to direct the whole of humanity to the person and mystery of Christ in whom alone is found the definitive answer to the fundamental questions of life.
- The radical newness of **life** brought by Christ as a gift from God and lived by his followers is the “good news” for men and women of every age; all are called to this personal realization and destined for it. Consequently, our mission, enabled by the Spirit of Jesus, is to work for the transformation of the world in order to bring about a new civilization, “the civilization of love” (Pope Paul VI), culminating in the fullness of life and love in the Kingdom of God.

Our mission is to share Jesus with the whole world. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to know him and sent to make him known “that all might have life and life in its fullness” (Jn 10:10).

Our mission is to invite everyone to encounter Jesus and to provide opportunities for that encounter of which we ourselves are to be signs and instruments. We are where we are so that Jesus can be there calling everyone to conversion and communion with him. Ours is a mission in behalf of communion as we companion each other on the journey of life.

The Church by her very nature is missionary and evangelization is at the heart of her mission. At the heart of evangelization is personal encounter with Christ in the Church.

- Evangelical witness, that is the witness of a Christian life, is the first and irreplaceable form of evangelization. Responding to the universal call to holiness, we are to be “the good news made flesh for all to hear.”
- Proclamation of the good news is the permanent priority of evangelization. As emphasized by Pope Paul VI: “Evangelization will always contain a clear proclamation that in Jesus Christ. . . salvation is offered to all people as a gift of God’s grace and mercy.” He is the one and only savior of the world.
- The fundamental task of evangelization is “to bring the good news into all the strata of society...transforming humanity from within and making it new” (Pope Paul VI).

Evangelization is to be a permanent dynamic in the life of the Church and includes the following:

1. The **initial evangelization** of those who do not know and believe in Christ, in whom the Church has not taken root and whose culture has not been influenced by the Gospel (evangelization in the precise sense, that is, the mission *ad gentes*);
2. The pastoral care and **ongoing evangelization** of those already Christians and members of the Church (evangelization in the wider sense);
3. The **re-evangelization**, or the reproposing of the Good News, directed to those baptized who have drifted away from the Church and who may be living a life removed from Christ and the Gospel (the new evangelization).

All in the Church, individually and collectively, are called to be intentional disciples of Jesus and are sent by him to participate in his mission and evangelizing activity, the ordained primarily by ministries, the laity primarily “by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God” which they do “by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation” (LG #31). The vocation of the laity is to evangelize the cultures of which they are a part and to affect their environment for Christ. In a phrase attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, “they should preach the Gospel everywhere, using words when necessary.”

All administration, ministries and apostolates, programs and projects in the Church should be directed to creating and expressing a culture of discipleship and mission, and their effectiveness should be measured in these terms. People without a mission perish. As disciples of the Lord, our life is mission.