

How to Think Like a “Missionary”

Jesus Christ was sent to the world by God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. John’s Gospel recounts that he became flesh or “pitched his tent” among us (John 1:14). He came as THE “Missionary” (Latin: “one who is sent”). He leaped across time, space, languages, age groups and cultures to reveal God’s unconditional love for us. His mission gave birth to the Church.

Everyday Missionary Living

Jesus tells us, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (Jn. 20: 23) Through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist (Sacraments of Initiation), we are called and sent to continue Jesus’ mission, to invite everyone to experience his love and forgiveness. We leave the comfort of our homes to bring Jesus to our neighborhoods, communities, parishes, workplaces. We cross into other peoples’ daily cultures. To live out this call, we need to think and act like missionaries. Pope Benedict XVI exhorts us, “May the Virgin Mary who accompanied with motherly solicitude the development of the newborn Church, also guide our footsteps in our time and obtain for us a new Pentecost of love. May she especially **make us all aware of being missionaries** (emphasis mine), that is, those who have been sent out by the Lord to be his witnesses at every moment of our [lives].” (“World Mission Sunday,” 2007)

Individual Activity (5 mins.):

Put a **plus (“+”)** in front of each of the eight statements below that **comforts you** as you seek to continue Christ’s mission of evangelization. Place a **minus (“-”)** in front of each statement that **challenges you** or is not part of the way of you approach evangelization.

_____ ***I sense Christ’s call to make my service to others an evangelizing ministry.***

Jesus may use people, nature, circumstances, daily prayer, study of Scripture and Church teaching, participation in small Christian faith sharing groups, and service to the poor and needy, among other things, to call and send me.

_____ ***I am on a mission with Jesus. I am not alone.***

Jesus promises to be with me as I seek to reach others (Matthew 28:19-20). He will go before me as I seek to minister to them. I am never alone in the missionary task!

_____ ***I look for ways that God is already working in people around me.***

I try to notice others who are going through stress, transition, and need in their lives. I look for ways the Holy Spirit is opening hearts through these experiences, giving me opportunities for share my faith in Jesus with them.

_____ ***I look for specific subcultures or groups to bring closer to Jesus Christ.***

I know that I cannot reach the whole neighborhood, community, city, country, or world with Christ’s good news. I try to focus on a specific group nearby me to which I already have access, such as neighbors, co-workers, community groups, immigrants, clubs, organizations, family members, and friends in person and online.

_____ ***I want to share the good news of Jesus in everyday language.***

I realize most people do not have a shared religious language. I try to introduce them to a personal relationship with Jesus and the Church, without using theological or church words.

_____ ***I try to understand the culture and history of those I want to reach.***

I seek to understand the national background, community, neighborhood, family, joy, hope, grief, and anguish of those around me. (Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," 1) I hope to share the good news of Jesus in ways that they can understand it as good news in their real life circumstances.

_____ ***I want to work on a team with others who share in the mission of evangelization.***

As I take on the role of missionary in everyday life, I am looking for others in my parish or diocese with which I can share this mission. I regularly seek to join other Catholics for training, prayer, and support in evangelizing.

_____ ***I believe the Holy Spirit is working through me, without seeing immediate results.***

I believe that Christ is working in others' hearts before I reach out to them. I know that what I bring is but one opportunity, one invitation, or one road sign pointing them toward him. The Holy Spirit is in charge of the results.

Silent Prayer of Commitment to Missionary Evangelization (5 mins.):

- **Give the Holy Spirit permission**—to call you to be a missionary in everyday life.
- **Surrender to the Spirit**—asking for the inner passion and focus on Jesus Christ that it takes to be faithful, so that you may weather any storms or discouragements.
- **Let other Catholics know** of your commitment and ask for their prayer and encouragement.

Reflection Questions for Small Group Sharing—4 or 5 people (25-30 mins.)

1. Describe a time when you met or heard a foreign missionary speak? How is that person's story or life different or the same as what is described above as "everyday missionary" living?
2. Which two of the eight statements above are **most comforting** to you? Why?
3. Which two of the eight statements above are **most challenging** to you? Why?

Evangelization Challenge:

Take an online evangelization training course like, "[Keys to Reaching Inactive Catholics.](http://www.pncea.org/store/index.asp?DEPARTMENT%20ID=68)" Explore six keys for developing a new model of everyday missionary outreach that goes beyond programs and relies on God's presence in each person's journey of faith. Go to <http://www.pncea.org/store/index.asp?DEPARTMENT%20ID=68> and click on "Courses: Paulist Evangelization Training Institute Online."