

Reflection for May 6, 2020

The readings during these weeks after Easter have featured the missionary adventures of the disciples in the early Church. Just since the beginning of May, we have read of Saul's conversion, becoming Paul, the great missionary; Peter raising Tabitha from the dead and with his brother disciples, witnessing the Spirit coming down upon the Gentiles at Caesarea; Barnabas and Paul sharing the message of Jesus to the Greeks at Antioch; and today Paul and Barnabas being commissioned and setting sail for Cyprus to proclaim the Word in the Jewish synagogues.

From the earliest days, the Church has been about missionary discipleship. In today's Gospel we hear a bit more about the message to be shared. Jesus speaks only the word that he has heard from the Father: "I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and what to speak."

Jesus tells us that he is the one who brings light into darkness. He reveals God's love for **all** – regardless of religious belief, culture, race or gender. The extent of God's love is revealed in Jesus: through his life, passion, death and Resurrection.

By our Baptism into the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we are all called to be missionary disciples. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Joy of the Gospel*, writes, "Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus."

He goes on to recall how those who encountered Jesus immediately went forth to proclaim him joyfully: the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalen upon encountering Jesus whom she took to be the gardener, the disciples on the road to Emmaus and Paul at his conversion. During this time between Easter and Pentecost, perhaps we can take the time to reflect on the ways in which we have encountered the Risen Lord and how we have communicated Jesus and the joy of the Gospel to those around us. Certainly, because of the upending of our lives due to COVID 10, people could use a little joy to brighten their day.

Some of us spend our lives as missionary disciples preaching the Good News. Others reveal the love of Christ by ministering as Jesus did – healing the sick, teaching, being one with the poor, working for justice or as

St. Francis told his followers, “Preach the Word always, sometimes use words.” All of us seek to live out our IHM mission – “creating a culture of peace and right relationship.”

IHMs have a strong sense of “mission.” We were “sent” on mission; we lived on a “mission.” Sometimes this was beyond Michigan and the United States. The shared experience of those who live and work in cross-cultural mission around the world has given us a global sensitivity. We pray for and work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation throughout our wounded world, be it through our sponsorship of ministries such as Detroit Cristo Rey High School and the Marygrove Conservancy or our participation on the Tri-IHM/ Oblate Haiti Committee, the Healing Racism and AIDS Committees or our support of Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking and Friends in Solidarity with South Sudan. IHM Armchair Activism is another way of responding to issues needing our advocacy. There are so many ways in which we, as members of the IHM congregation, continue the liberating mission of Jesus in new and creative ways.

As we age, we may no longer be on a “mission” actively ministering with those in need, but, by our Baptism we continue to be missionary disciples. For many of us, prayer for the concerns of our world may be the most significant ministry we will ever have. In these tumultuous and challenging times, prayer may be the most important intervention we can make. Until our dying breath, we continue to live out our baptismal call as missionary disciples of Jesus, the Christ.

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