



Called & Sent: Living as Missionary Disciples of Christ

As Eastern Catholics, we are called and sent as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ who know and live our faith, and share the Good News in every nation. Every parish is meant to be not just a spiritual home for the faithful we have, but as an apostolic outpost – a missionary center – for the New Evangelization to all peoples wherever the *vineyard of the Lord* is planted.

To be *disciples of Christ* means that we are first and foremost baptized and committed followers of *Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life* within the communion of disciples known as the Church. It is to live the *life in the Spirit* as communicated by the apostles to the earliest Christians after Pentecost by observing *apostolic teaching, worship, fellowship and leadership* (Acts 2:42).

To be *missionaries of Christ* means that we are active participants in the apostolic call of the Church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them all that Christ has commanded.

Just as the call to *faithful discipleship* is not limited to the lay faithful, monastics and religious, so the call to *faithful mission* is not limited to the ordained clergy who serve in Christ's name. Every baptized and chrismated Eastern Catholic is called to be *missionary disciples* of Jesus Christ, living and spreading the Gospel for the sake of our own salvation and for that of the people and nations around us.

To learn and grow as missionary disciples means that all of the People God should see themselves as part of the Church's effort towards a **New Evangelization**. This phrase, "new evangelization" is in reference to a *renewed missionary impetus of the Holy Spirit that seeks to draw each of us who are baptized to a deeper, personal and joyful encounter with Jesus Christ that inspires a simpler, informed and attractive witness of faith to others, inviting them to explore more deeply the meaning and message of Jesus within the common life of the Church.*

Let's explore what each of these points mean.

It is a renewed missionary impetus of the Holy Spirit...

No work of the Church can occur without the energizing grace of the Holy Spirit, who in every age calls the Church to a world which is transformed by Christ. The grace given to the Church is the grace of holiness – of *theosis* – and the grace of mission. This grace is renewed especially in the *epiclesis* of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and upon the Holy Gifts in the Divine Liturgy.

That seeks to draw each of us who are baptized...

As baptized and chrismated Christians, we have been sealed with the grace of the Holy Spirit and made part of *a royal priesthood and holy nation* – the Church. As such, the grace of Pentecost dwells within us forming us into a *holy temple* that is a *light to the nations*. This is our fundamental vocation in unity with the shepherds and servants of the Church.

To a deeper, personal and joyful encounter with Jesus Christ...

This encounter with Christ happens first and foremost in the worship of the Church – the proclamation of the Holy Scriptures, the liturgical celebrations, sacred icons, sacramental mysteries, and gathering of the parish community. It also happens in times of personal prayer with the Lord, including the reading of the Holy Scriptures and the praying of the Jesus Prayer (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on me a sinner!”) which should be practiced daily, as well as the common life of the family as the *domestic church*. During His earthly ministry, Jesus walked daily with His disciples, forming them by His words, deeds and presence. Every Christian should seek to develop such a personal and daily walk with Christ whom we encounter providentially in every circumstance and person in our life, leading us to a deeper growth in His likeness.

That inspires a simpler, informed and attractive witness of faith to others...

If we read the New Testament, those who had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ or with those witnesses who knew Him, and then became believers, were changed by grace and became bold and joyful witnesses to others. The first witness was the **example** of their own life, which were filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit and growth in Christian virtue. The second witness was their **presence** in accompanying and serving those who were in need of the mercy of the Gospel (Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy). The third witness was through **proclamation**, sharing their faith in the message and person of Jesus Christ and the Church.

Inviting them to explore more deeply the meaning and message of Jesus within the life of the Church.

This witness also includes an invitation to **come and see** the Lord and to consider *returning to* or *joining* the spiritual family of missionary disciples known as the Catholic Church. It is an invitation to be joined to the **Body of Christ**, to **receive the treasures of faith and salvation**, as well as **the gifts of the Holy Spirit** for growth in spiritual maturity and mission. In this regard, the Eastern Catholic Churches have much to offer through the beauty of her liturgical worship, faith and common life in our parishes.

Conclusion

Eastern Catholics, as much as those of our Western Catholic brothers and sisters, are called to be witnesses to the Gospel in *word and deed*. They are called to be a *light to the nations* and to fulfill their vocation as *missionary disciples* of Jesus Christ. This initiative of the Holy Spirit with the *New Evangelization* must be responded to by every individual Eastern Catholic Christian and every parish community. Prayerfully consider and discern the way that the Lord is calling and sending you as His *missionary disciple*!

INDIVIDUAL	FAMILY	PARISH