

"You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8)

This is the central point, the heart of Jesus' teaching to the disciples, in view of their being sent forth into the world. The disciples are to be witnesses of Jesus, thanks to the grace of the Holy Spirit that they will receive. Wherever they go and in whatever place they find themselves. Christ was the first to be sent from the Father. In a similar way, every Christian is called to be a missionary and witness to Christ. And the Church, the community of Christ's disciples, has no other mission than that of bringing the Gospel to the entire world by bearing witness to Christ. To evangelize is the very identity of the Church.

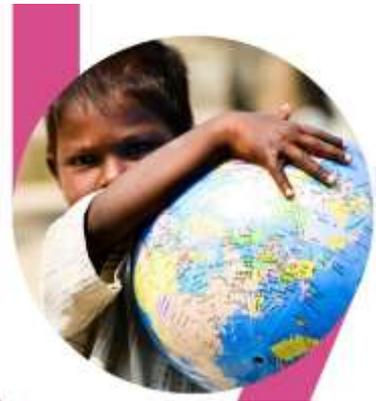
The example of a Christian life and the proclamation of Christ are inseparable. One is at the service of the other. They are the two lungs with which any community must breathe, if it is to be missionary. This kind of complete, consistent and joyful witness to Christ will surely be a force of attraction also for the growth of the Church in the third millennium.

"To the ends of the earth"

The words "to the ends of the earth" should challenge the disciples of Jesus in every age and impel them to press beyond familiar places in bearing witness to him. For all the benefits of modern travel, there are still geographical areas in which missionary witnesses of Christ have not arrived to bring the Good News of his love. Then too no human reality is foreign to the concern of the disciples of Jesus in their mission. Christ's Church will continue to "go forth" towards new geographical, social and existential horizons, towards "borderline" places and human situations, in order to bear witness to Christ and his love to men and women of every people, culture and social status. The Church must constantly keep pressing forward, beyond her own confines, in order to testify to all the love of Christ.

"You will receive power" from the Holy Spirit

When the risen Christ commissioned the disciples to be his witnesses, he also promised them the grace needed for this great responsibility: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). According to the account in Acts, it was precisely following the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples that the first act of witnessing to the crucified and risen Christ took place. Whereas they had previously been weak, fearful and closed in on themselves, the Holy Spirit gave them the strength, courage and wisdom to bear witness to Christ before all.



Dear brothers and sisters, I continue to dream of a completely missionary Church, and a new era of missionary activity among Christian communities. Indeed, would that all of us in the Church were what we already are by virtue of baptism: prophets, witnesses, missionaries of the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the ends of the earth! Mary, Queen of the Missions, pray for us!

(Pope Francis – Message for Mission Sunday 2022)