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Message for BBNeighbourhoods  
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Gospel, which is the Good News of Jesus Christ, is not just there to be proclaimed, although that is an important action. A more important and even more difficult action is integrating the Gospel into the fibre of our very lives. If we are honest, we would find that many of us struggle with this aspect the most. The theology and the proclamation of the Word is relatively easy. What is more challenging is the living out of the Word of God and becoming a credible witness to the Gospel.

In the Gospels, Jesus spoke of a cost involved in responding to His call to become a disciple ([Lk 14:28](#)), in terms of what becoming a disciple will do to our plans, our reputations and our possessions. He told Peter that answering the call will take him to places he would rather not go ([Jn 21:18](#)). The Christian vocation would cost them their very lives. To live one's vocation can appear to be foolishness according to the wisdom of the secular world.

Why bother with such foolishness? Because when the Word of God is integrated into our lives, we undergo a transformation.

When I integrate myself with the Word of God, I do not simply “become a better person”, as if the Christian faith is merely a form of therapy. A Christian immersed *in*, integrated *with*, and transformed *by* the Word of God becomes in his or her own person a living Gospel, an embodied proclamation of the glory of the Lord. A Christian who integrates the Word of God makes the Word become his or her own flesh and allows the Word to dwell within them and dwell among us once again ([Jn 1:1-18](#)). When a person lives a life transformed by the Word, what was once an abstract concept of “the Christ” turns into the living body of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Anyone who encounters a Christian who has truly been transformed by Christ will come to an encounter with the person of Jesus Himself, as it was in the Scriptural accounts all those centuries ago. The face of Christ is not an abstract concept, nor a distant memory. It is a living and breathing reality in any Christian who really abides in the Word of God. A Christian transformed by the Word of God is a living and breathing reality in the present, another incarnation in our day.

We have read in the Gospels just how powerful the incarnation and an encounter with the incarnate Word can be. In the first instance, the incarnate Word of God is someone who will attract others. The incarnate Word of God can draw others out of themselves and ignite that desire for more than what their lives currently offer but never satisfy. A person transformed by the Word of God will spark a desire in others for the same kind of transformation in their own lives, not just for themselves, but also in the lives of others.



What is the reason for this attraction? It is because a life integrated with Jesus is not a life that is less human. On the contrary, Christians who truly reflect Jesus are living lives that are fully human. A life that is fully human is an attractive life, a cause of wonder, and a call to move beyond a life of bland mediocrity and compromise.

You can see how this is also a form of leadership. To lead one out of mediocrity, to inspire, and to instil desire to be more human in every pursuit. Instead of shoving from behind, the Christian transformed by Christ draws and attracts from the front.

Leadership here is not measured by how many people you can boss around. In the context of vocation, leadership is measured by how a person has their life transformed by the Word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

My dear sisters and brothers do not be afraid to respond to this call to lead, to embody the beauty of Christ Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the glory of the Lord.

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