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Message for BBNeighbourhoods 1 November 2021

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The English word *disciple* has its origin in the Latin word *discipulus* meaning learner; from the verb *discere*, to learn. These days it is commonly used to mean “a follower”, and in the Christian context more precisely, a follower of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the further one moves away from the original meaning, the more watered down that meaning becomes.

One can regularly hear people from all walks of life claiming to be a Christian because they follow Jesus, however, being a Christian entails much more than simply “following”. To be more exact, being a disciple of Jesus is to learn from him the Truth of the Gospel and to follow Him by our way of life and love. Knowledge of the teachings of Jesus is essential for an authentic discipleship. Reading, studying, praying, discussing, and discerning the teachings of Jesus, in both the Scripture and Tradition, will take a lifetime to unfold in the life of each of us as Catholic Christians.

Over the past 55 years, following the Second Vatican Council, successive Popes and Bishops have made much about the discipleship that is proper to every baptised Christian. The Council also gave new impetus to the mission of the baptised to evangelise the world in which we live. To be missionary is to be sent into the world to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Missionary disciples are formed by the teachings of Christ and sent to propagate the seeds of faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. There are some who think that it is only possible to engage as missionary disciples if we have an academic degree in theology or one of the sacred sciences. Higher learning provides wonderful opportunities however, Pope Francis reminds us that “*in order to be in a state of mission, it is enough to live life as it comes, carrying out the most habitual actions and the most ordinary occupations in a missionary way, amidst the people that the Lord has us encounter*”.

There are several areas of mission that the Holy Father proposes, and this week I would like to share them with you so that each of us might discern more fully where God is sending us as disciples of the Lord. This infographic ([Click here](#)) highlights five areas of mission:

1. Mission of compassion
2. Mission of hope
3. Mission of fraternity
4. Mission of encounter and a Church of outreach
5. Mission of joy



The Second Vatican Council's decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, *Ad gentes*, reminds us that the mission of the Church is fulfilled by that activity which makes her fully present to all people or nations (cf AG5). By following Jesus as faithful disciples and being sent by the power of the Holy Spirit as missionaries, our community of the Church is animated to preach the Gospel in our ordinary daily lives. Nourished by the Eucharist and the Sacraments, we are urged to embrace others in the great dialogue of faith.

This week, how might you live your life as a missionary disciple of compassion, hope, fraternity, encounter and outreach, and joy?

+Anthony