‘Missionary Discipleship’

Discipleship and mission are like the two sides of a single coin: when the disciple is in love with Christ, he cannot stop proclaiming to the world that only in him do we find salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). In effect, the disciple knows that without Christ there is no light, no hope, no love, no future

(Pope Benedict XVI, Aparecida, 59)

My wish is that all of us, after these days of grace, will have the courage, yes the courage, to walk in the presence of the Lord

(Pope Francis, Pope Francis, 2013)

But even apart from mission, the Church needs young people: ‘We need the enthusiasm of the young. We need their joi de vivre [joy of life]. In it is reflected something of the original joy God had in creating man’

(Pope John Paul II, Man of the Millenium, 1998)

Discipleship entails an on-going effort on our part to be faithful to the one who has been so nobly generous in His embrace for all humankind.

It is effectively this Jesus who has declared His own Mother to be the Spiritual Mother of the disciple John, and by extension, the Mother of the Human Race.

Mary’s Motherhood continues in the Church, the New People of God

(Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, A year of Devotion to Mary, 2017)
‘Missionary Discipleship’ – Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The Missionary Discipleship Committee decided to take as their starting point the Aparecida-Concluding Document of the conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean 2007. The theme of the General Conference was: ‘Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ, so that our peoples may have life in him.’

2. Realities and challenges that confront missionary discipleship and evangelization

Listed here are the diverse problems effecting our world, into which our evangelical mandate commissions us to speak. Problems include false ideologies; individualism; economic problems; infidelities in doctrine and morality; exodus of believers to sects and other religious groups; secularization; problems of violence, poverty, and injustice; the growing culture of death; corruption and racism.

3. What does missionary discipleship and evangelization mean?

The Church has the great task of guarding and nourishing the faith of the People of God, and reminding the faithful of this continent that, by virtue of their Baptism, they are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ. This implies following him, living in intimacy with him, imitating his example and bearing witness. Every baptized person receives from Christ, like the Apostles, the missionary mandate: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.

4. Who are missionary disciples and evangelizers?

The mandate to become a missionary disciple and evangelizer is given to everyone in the Church, to imitate Jesus by inviting all to follow him. We are to go, each one of us, into very different situations, to meet those who do not yet believe in Christ within our own territory, and to seek all the baptized who do not participate in the life of the Christian communities. We undertake this task within the everyday exercise of communion through the diversity of charisms, ministries, and services by being Spirit-filled evangelizers who pray and work so that charity may abound.

5. How should we practice missionary discipleship and evangelization?

The main tenets are summed up in the phrases: ‘to encounter Him’, ‘close bond with Jesus’, ‘share in his mission,’ ‘transform situations’, ‘proclaim Jesus Christ through the holiness of their lives’, ‘participating in the Life that comes from the bosom of the Father’, ‘illuminate with the light of the Gospel’, ‘embraces all with the love of God’, ‘to be engaged in a lifelong process of learning,’ ‘place the heart of the Lord’s mandate for his Church at the heart of everything we do’, and ‘proclaim this Good News.’

6. The Pontifical Authority of the Holy Fathers on discipleship and evangelization?

The central theological insights of the Second Vatican Council can be summed up in the following phrases: the universal call to holiness and the universal call to mission. In their ministry as universal shepherd the popes of the last 50 years have called, with one voice, for all the faithful to take up their roles as missionary disciples.

7. The formation process of missionary disciples and evangelizers?

We highlight five fundamental aspects in the process of forming missionary disciples: 1) The Encounter with Jesus Christ; 2) Conversion; 3) Discipleship; 4) Communion; 5) Mission.

8. Places of formation for missionary disciples?

Wherever communities gather for the purpose of missionary discipleship and evangelization.
1. Introduction

This document is by no means an authoritative and comprehensive definition of Missionary Discipleship and Evangelization. It is simply a map and blueprint to initiate discourse (dialogue, discussion and conversation) in parishes across the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, as a ‘preparatory phase’ towards the ‘institutional phase’ (CAN. 59) of the forthcoming Diocesan Synod, as convened by Archbishop Buti Tlhagale. The Missionary Discipleship Committee, which was tasked to prepare a discussion document, decided to take the Aparecida-Concluding Document as the starting point of the investigation, in preparation for the theme assigned to them. We have also drawn from other sources. The rationale (reasons) for adopting this document were obvious, in the sense that, firstly, it is comprehensive in the range of subjects that were discussed and deliberated upon at Aparecida, and among them, missionary discipleship is prominent. Aparecida is a document that was produced at the end of the conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in the Conference Hall of the Shrine of Aparecida, Brazil, from, 13 – 31 May to 2007. The theme of the General Conference was: ‘Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ, so that our peoples may have life in him.’

A wide range of issues were also discussed, which played themselves out in Latin America and the Caribbean, but also applied to the whole world, evolving from the twentieth into the twenty-first century. Secondly, human nature being what it is, as ‘the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak’ (Mt 26:41), these issues have persisted and seem to be far from being resolved, and are likely to abide with us in the coming decades, and perhaps centuries, if the tide that propels them is not curbed or curtailed. It is therefore appropriate that they are kept alive in our dialogue, especially within the context of the missionary discipleship and evangelization role of the Church. This is not simply because we share the same southern hemisphere with Latin America and the Caribbean, but also because we share the planet with all the peoples who inhabit it, and are affected by the same issues and concerns, which affect all of us physically and spiritually.
Aparecida raised a number of important questions: What does Christ actually give us? Why do we want to be disciples of Christ? Are we really convinced that Christ is the way, the truth and the life? Who knows God? How can we know him? What does faith in this God give us? How can we truly know Christ so as to be able to follow him and live with him, so as to find life in him and to communicate that life to others, to society and to the world?

In the process of deliberations and trying to seek answers to these questions, within the scope of the conference theme, a wide range of priority issues came under discussion, namely, culture, values, Christian life, consciences, justice and truth, political virtues, the family, marriage, priests, the lay faithful, religious men and women and consecrated persons, young people and pastoral care of vocations, amongst others.

Perhaps it is appropriate to start with referring to the realities and challenges that were identified and those that we can add, followed by a general understanding of what is meant by missionary discipleship and evangelization. To the latter effect we did not limit ourselves to drawing from the Aparecida, but also extended our starting point to a variety of documents to chart this path, so that the questions that we will leave to parishes at the end of this document, to ponder upon, exchange ideas and thoughts, and perhaps try to seek resolutions, are understood within a defined area of understanding, albeit not comprehensive and exhaustive.

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1. Introduction (above)
2. Realities and challenges that confront missionary discipleship and evangelization
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9. Questions for conversation and discussion in parishes
2. Realities and challenges that confront missionary discipleship and evangelization

The Aparecida conference identified problems which plague our times: Globalization, mass media, ideology of gender; choice of sexual orientation; pluriculturality or multiculturalism (‘absence of an integrated meaning for everything that exists’); falsified notion of “reality”; supremacy of science and technology; no personal family and community attachments; changes that have modified the traditional roles of men and women; consumer culture; narcissistic (over-indulgence in oneself or self-absorption) and individualism; globalized culture; competition; concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few; social exclusion; asymmetrical (unbalanced) economies; lack of understanding of fundamental rights and of their corresponding duties; exclusion from decisions on the wealth of biodiversity and nature; failure to protect the planet and preserve nature created by God; absence of authentic obedience and evangelical exercise of authority; infidelities in doctrine; morality and communion; attack on biodiversity and ultimately against life; religious individualism; exodus of believers to sects and other religious groups; cultural trends contrary to Christ and the Church; frustration among priests faced with immense pastoral work; the scarcity of priests; changing cultural paradigms; secularization; problems of violence, poverty, and injustice; and the growing culture of death, which affects life in all its forms, to name but some. To this list we can add: Corruption; fraud; forgery; maladministration; graft; nepotism; inter-generational conflict; exploitation; deception, expropriation of resources, inefficiency, racism, xenophobia, entitlement, defeating ends of justice; and many others that haunt South Africa. It is in this context and complex maze of problems, challenges and apparent chaos that it becomes imperative to look into the role of missionary discipleship and Evangelization.
3. What does missionary discipleship and evangelization mean?

The Church has the great task of guarding and nourishing the faith of the People of God, and reminding the faithful of this Continent that, by virtue of their Baptism, they are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ. This implies following him, living in intimacy with him, imitating his example and bearing witness. Every baptized person receives from Christ, like the Apostles, the missionary mandate: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized, will be saved” (Mk 16:15). To be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ and to seek life “in him” presupposes being deeply rooted in him (Aparecida, p5 – 6).

Jesus gave his nascent Church four tasks: go, make, baptize and teach. Of these four imperatives, we find in the original Greek that one of them is a finite verb and three are participles. A finite verb is always the grammatical hinge of a sentence…So it is with the Great Commission… The finite verb is “make” – literally, “make disciples” (matheteusate). This task is the very heart of the Great Commission, and it is around the making of disciples that all the other missionary aspects of the Church revolve.

Being a Church of disciples, however, is just a part of our calling. This Church of disciples must “go” and “make disciples” of all nations, of all peoples. We are to proclaim this Good News not just to lukewarm or fallen-away Catholics, but to all who do not know Christ and his Church. We are called to go out to the fringes of society, to the poor, the rich, the vulnerable and those who hide in their gated communities. We are called to go. Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (John 20:21) The Greek word that means “to send” is apostellein. An apostle is one who is sent. To take up the Great Commission of Jesus means that we have been sent, that we are apostles…We are a Church that is sent. The Latin equivalent for apostellein is the verb mittere, which gives us the noun missio and the English word “mission.” Thus, an apostle is a missionary. That the Church is apostolic means that it is missionary by nature: it is who we are; it is our deepest identity. “How are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?” says Saint Paul. (Romans 10:15) Disciples must eventually become apostles. (Divine Renovation)
4. Who are missionary disciples and evangelizers?

The quotes below are drawn from various sources and reflect the committee’s attempt to find a composite working definition to facilitate broad understanding and scope. This can then guide parishes in preparing on this theme for the forthcoming synod. It should not be regarded, in any way, as a thesis or commentary:

Everyone in the Church is called to be disciples and missionaries. It is a duty to form ourselves and to form all of God’s People in order to fulfill this task with responsibility and boldness (Aparecida, p16).

Jesus went out to meet people in very different situations—men and women, poor and rich, Jews and foreigners, the just and sinners—and invited all to follow Him. Today he is still issuing the invitation to find in Him the Father’s love. Accordingly, the missionary disciple must be a man or a woman who makes the Father’s merciful love visible, especially to the poor and sinners. (Aparecida, p59)

Upon receiving faith and Baptism, we Christians accept the action of the Holy Spirit who leads to confessing Jesus as Son of God and calling God “Abba.” “By means of the common priesthood of the People of God,” all of us who are baptized […] are called to live and transmit communion with the Trinity, for “evangelization is a calling to participate in the communion of the Trinity.” (Aparecida, p62)

The diversity of charisms, ministries, and services opens the horizon to the everyday exercise of communion, through which the gifts of the Spirit are made available to others so that charity may abound (cf. 1 Cor 12:4-12). Each baptized person in effect bears gifts that he or she must develop in unity and complementarity with those of others so as to form the one Body of Christ, given up for the life of the world. Practical recognition of the organic unity and diversity of functions will assure greater missionary vitality and will be a sign and instrument of reconciliation and peace for our peoples. Each community is
called to discover and integrate the silent hidden talents that the Spirit bestows as a gift on the faithful. (Aparecida, p64)

The diocese is called to be a “missionary community” in all its communities and structures. Each diocese needs to enhance its missionary awareness, going out to meet those who do not yet believe in Christ within its own territory, and respond adequately to the major issues of the society of which it is a part. But it is also called to go out with a maternal spirit to seek all the baptized who do not participate in the life of the Christian communities. (Aparecida, p65)

Every parish is called to be the space where the Word is received and accepted, is celebrated and expressed, in adoration of the Body of Christ, and thus is the dynamic source of missionary discipleship. Its renewal requires that it always let itself be enlightened again by the living and efficacious Word. (Aparecida, p66)

The People of God feel the need for disciple-priests: those who have a deep experience of God, are configured to the heart of the Good Shepherd, docile to the motions of the Spirit, who are nourished by the Word of God, the Eucharist and prayer; for missionary-priests: who are moved by pastoral charity which leads them to care for the flock entrusted to them and to seek out who have strayed furthest, preaching the Word of God, always in deep communion with their bishop, priests, deacons, men and women religious, and lay people; for servant-of-life-priests: who are alert to the needs of the poorest, committed to the defense of the rights of the weakest, and promoters of the culture of solidarity. The need is also for priests full of mercy, available to administer the sacrament of Reconciliation. (Aparecida, p69)

Within the parish boundaries, the Christian family is the first and most basic ecclesial community. That is where the fundamental values of Christian life are lived and passed on. It is called “domestic church.” In it the parents are the primary transmitters of the faith to their children, teaching them through example and word to be true missionary disciples.
Likewise, when this experience of missionary discipleship is authentic, “a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part.” (Aparecida, p74)

Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts. These unilateral and incomplete proposals only reach a few groups and prove incapable of radiating beyond them because they curtail the Gospel. What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. (Joy of the Gospel, 205)

Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless … “we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the incarnation”. (Joy of the Gospel, 206)

There is always the risk that some moments of prayer can become an excuse for not offering one’s life in mission; a privatized lifestyle can lead Christians to take refuge in some false forms of spirituality. (Joy of the Gospel 262)

The quotations above give ample evidence as to who has the mandate to become a missionary disciple and evangelizer (‘everyone in the Church is called’), and to whom shall they go (‘Jesus invited all to follow him’) and where (‘very different situations’ ‘to meet those who do not yet believe in Christ within [their] own territory, and to seek all the baptized who do not participate in the life of the Christian communities’ when (‘to the everyday exercise of communion through the diversity of charisms, ministries, and services’) and how (‘Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work’) so that charity may abound.
5. How should we practice missionary discipleship and evangelization?

Jesus invites us to encounter Him and to bind ourselves closely to Him, for He is the source of life (cf. Jn 15:5-15) and He alone has the words of eternal life (cf. Jn 6:68) ... Jesus chose them so that “they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach” (Mk 3:14), so that they could follow him in order to “be His” and be part “of his own” and share in his mission. The disciple experiences that the close bond with Jesus in the group of his own means participating in the Life that comes from the bosom of the Father; it means being formed to take on his own style of life and his same motivations (cf. Lk 6:40b), sharing his lot and taking on his mission of making all things new. (Aparecida, p56)

The greatest realization of Christian existence as trinitarian living as “children in the Son” is given us by the Virgin Mary, who by her faith (cf. Lk 1:45) and obedience to God’s will (cf. Lk 1:38) and by her constant meditation on the Word and on the actions of Jesus (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), is the Lord’s most perfect disciple. (Aparecida, p90)

As missionary disciples, we want the influence of Christ to reach the ends of the Earth. We discover the presence of the Holy Spirit in mission lands through signs:

a) The presence of the values of the Kingdom of God in cultures, recreating them from within to transform situations inimical to the gospel.

b) The efforts of men and women who find in their religious beliefs the energy for their commitment to engage with the world of their time.

c) The birth of the ecclesial community.

d) The testimony of persons and communities that proclaim Jesus Christ through the holiness of their lives. (Aparecida, p119)
The disciples and missionaries of Christ must illuminate with the light of the Gospel all realms of social life. The preferential option for poor, rooted in the Gospel, requires pastoral attention devoted to the builders of society. If many contemporary structures produce poverty, it is partly due to the lack of fidelity to their gospel commitments on the part of many Christians with special political, economic and cultural responsibilities. (Aparecida, p153)

The disciple and missionary of Christ active in the realms of politics and economics and in decision-making centers is exposed to the influence of a culture often dominated by materialism, selfish interests, and a conception of the human being contrary to the Christian vision. Hence, disciples must be firmly grounded in their following of the Lord, so as to have the strength necessary not to succumb to the wiles of materialism and selfishness, but to build a moral consensus within themselves on the fundamental values that make it possible to build a just society. (Aparecida, p153 – 154)

This evangelizing mission embraces all with the love of God, especially the poor and those who suffer. Hence, it cannot be separated from solidarity with the needy, and the promotion of their integral human development: If the persons they encounter are living in poverty, it is necessary to help them, as the first Christian communities did, by practicing solidarity and making them feel truly loved. (Aparecida, p166)

How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and simply to be in his presence! How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! What then happens is that “we speak of what we have seen and heard” (1 Jn 1:3). The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and
helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others. (Joy of the Gospel, 264)

The missionary is convinced that, through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death. The missionary’s enthusiasm in proclaiming Christ comes from the conviction that he is responding to that expectation. Enthusiasm for evangelization is based on this conviction. We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive, and a message which cannot mislead or disappoint. It penetrates to the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. It is a truth which is never out of date because it reaches that part of us which nothing else can reach. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by an infinite love. (Joy of the Gospel, 264)

The word in Greek for “disciple” is mathetes, which, in turn, comes from the verb manthanein, meaning “to learn”. To be a disciple is to be a learner. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be engaged in a lifelong process of learning from and about Jesus the master, Jesus the teacher. The English term “disciple” comes from the Latin discipulus, and provides the connotation that this learning process is not haphazard, but intentional and disciplined. To become a disciple is to commit to such a process of growth. To make disciples. That’s it! This is the heart of the matter and the lens through which we are to evaluate all activity of the Church – all pastoral programs, all expenditures and all use of our buildings.

There must be a New Evangelization. Jesus Christ must be proposed anew! We must break through the invisible suits of armour that so many in our pews wear. We must labour to create spaces for people to come to know Jesus as the living Lord, awaken that hunger and then begin to form them, to make them disciples. We must rediscover our identity and place the heart of the Lord’s mandate for his Church at the heart of everything we
do, so that at the heart of every parish there will be a community of growing, maturing believers who are committed to a lifelong process of disciplined learning, who are discovering their God-given talents, who are prepared to serve and eventually to become apostles. We must labour so that a Church of disciples may eventually, someday, be considered normal.

These quotations give us guidance as to how we can engage in missionary discipleship and evangelization. The starting point is the imperative ‘must’, and this emphasizes that there is an inalienable responsibility that is placed upon us as missionary disciples and evangelizers. The main tenets are summed up in the phrases: ‘to encounter Him’, ‘be with him’, ‘close bond with Jesus’, ‘share in his mission’, ‘transform situations’, ‘proclaim Jesus Christ through the holiness of their lives’, ‘participating in the Life that comes from the bosom of the Father’, ‘illuminate with the light of the Gospel’, ‘be firmly grounded’, ‘embraces all with the love of God’, ‘simply to be in his presence’, ‘knowing the truth about God’, ‘to be engaged in a lifelong process of learning’, ‘Jesus Christ must be proposed anew’, ‘place the heart of the Lord’s mandate for his Church at the heart of everything we do’, and ‘proclaim this Good News.’
6. The Pontifical Authority of the Holy Fathers on missionary discipleship and evangelization?

The Council and the Popes:

The Second Vatican Council

The central theological insights of all sixteen conciliar documents can be summed up in the following phrases: the universal call to holiness and the universal call to mission. Holiness and mission are not new in the teaching of the Church, but the stress on the universal nature of these things was relatively new. The idea that the call to holiness and mission is rooted not in ordination or in religious profession but in baptism had been so forgotten that it was revolutionary. We are called to holiness because we are baptized. We are called to mission, to evangelize, to share the Good News because we are baptized.

Pope Paul VI

Pope Paul VI in Evangelii Nuntiandi [Evangelization in the Modern World]… enunciated a theology for mission and evangelization that is the responsibility of all Christians…It has been possible to define evangelization in the terms of proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him, of preaching, of catechesis, of conferring Baptism and the other Sacraments.(EN,no.17).

Pope Paul also reminds us that we must avoid the temptation of thinking that the witness of our lives alone is sufficient to evangelize. As he says, “the Good News proclaimed by the witness of life, sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life.” (EN, no. 22) This is a very important principle for us today, as it emphasizes the proclamation or kerygmatic dimension of Paul VI’s definition.
Saint Peter says, “Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15), and so does Pope Paul, when he insists that Evangelization must be “made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus.” There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed. (EN, no. 22)

Evangelization will also always contain – as the foundation, center, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy. (EN, no. 22)

**Pope John Paul II**

From his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* [1990] (“The Mission of the Redeemer,” in English), he said this:

I sense the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the missions *ad gentes* [to the nations]. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples. (RM, no. 3)

He builds on this theme in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millenio Ineunte* [2001] (On Entering the New Millenium):

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission which cannot be left to a group of “specialists” but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the people of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep Him for themselves, they must proclaim him. (No. 40)
Pope Benedict XVI

The distinction between evangelization and catechesis increases, with evangelization being identified more with proclamation that leads to encounter. Under Benedict, a relatively unfamiliar term, at least in official Catholic documents, begins to appear more and more often. Benedict begins to speak of the necessity of the personal encounter and personal relationship with Jesus [as expressed in a Lineamenta document to the Bishops of the Philippines in 2011:]

The Lineamenta defines the goal of evangelization as the “realization of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the Spirit, thereby leading to an experiencing of His Father and our Father.” (no. 11) Evangelization is always Trinitarian, but not in an abstract, theoretical manner. It is about experiencing a person or persons, and the goal of evangelization is to bring people to Jesus Christ so they can then be filled with the Holy Spirit and come to know God the Father. The Holy Spirit who fills us is the Spirit of adoption, who speaks to our spirits so that we cry out, “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:15) It is totally Trinitarian. This is the goal of evangelization.

That the average Catholic struggles even today with evangelization is seen in the reason for the synod topic given in the Lineamenta document: “That despite the fact that the expression [the New Evangelization] is widely known in the Church it has failed to be accepted fully and totally.” (no. 5) … Loving one’s faith implies bearing witness to it, bringing it to others and allowing others to participate in it. (no. 10) … “People are able to evangelize only when they have been evangelized and allow themselves to be evangelized, that is, renewed spiritually through a personal encounter and lived communion with Jesus Christ.” (no. 22)

The notion of an individual having an encounter with the living God … is at the heart of our Catholic mystical tradition. Is mysticism or mystical union the same as personal relationship with Christ? Surely it is: if someone has a mystical experience with God, it is likely personal. That is what the mystics in our tradition speak about when they describe a deeply intimate and personal encounter with God.
Pope Francis

Notes from his speech to the conclave on March 9, 2013, four days before he was elected pope, reads as follows: Thinking of the next Pope: a man who, through the contemplation of Jesus Christ and the adoration of Jesus Christ, may help the Church to go out from itself toward the existential peripheries, that may help it to be the fecund mother who lives “by the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.” (Divine Renovation)

I would like to say something. What do I expect as a consequence of the Youth Day? I expect a mess. There will be one. There will be a mess here in Rio? There will be! But I want a mess in the dioceses! I want people to go out! I want the Church to go out to the street! I want us to defend ourselves against everything that is worldliness, that is installation, that is comfortableness, that is clericalism, that is being shut-in in ourselves. The parishes, the schools, the institutions, exist to go out! If they don’t go out, they become NGOs, and the Church can’t be an NGO. (World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro).

My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an “extra” or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. (EG 273)

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the people of God have become missionary disciples…we need to move ‘from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry.’” (EG, no. 15)

The quotes in this section are provided in lieu of the fact that ‘The office uniquely committed by the Lord to Peter, the first of the Apostles, and to be transmitted to his successors, abides in the Bishop of the Church of Rome. He is the head of the College of Bishops, the Vicar of Christ, and the Pastor of the universal Church here on earth’ (CAN. 331). In their ministry as universal shepherd the popes of the last 50 years have called with one voice, for all the faithful to take up their roles as missionary disciples.
7. The formation process of missionary disciples and evangelizers?

We highlight five fundamental aspects in the process of forming missionary disciples. They appear differently at each step of the journey but are closely intertwined and draw nourishment from one another:

a) *The Encounter with Jesus Christ:* Those who will be his disciples are already seeking him (cf. Jn 1:38), but it is the Lord who calls them: “Follow me” (Mk 1:14; Mt 9:9). The deeper meaning of the search must be discovered, and the encounter with Christ that leads to Christian initiation must be fostered. This encounter must be constantly renewed by personal testimony, proclamation of the *kerygma,* and the missionary action of the community. The *kerygma* is not simply a stage, but the leitmotiv of a process that culminates in the maturity of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Without the *kerygma,* the other aspects of this process are condemned to sterility, with hearts not truly converted to the Lord. Only out of the *kerygma* does the possibility of a true Christian initiation occur. Hence, the Church should have it present in all its actions.

b) *Conversion:* It is the initial response of those who have listened to the Lord in wonder, who believe in Him through the action of the Spirit, and who decide to be His friend and go with him, changing how they think and live, accepting the cross of Christ, conscious that dying to sin is attaining life. In Baptism and the sacrament of Reconciliation Christ’s Redemption is actualized for us.

c) *Discipleship:* The person constantly matures in knowledge, love, and following of Jesus the master, and delves deeper into the mystery of His person, his example, and his teaching. Ongoing catechesis and sacramental life are of fundamental importance for this stage; they strengthen initial conversion, and enable missionary disciples to persevere in Christian life and mission in the midst of the world that challenges them.
d) *Communion*: There can be no Christian life except in community: in families, parishes, communities of consecrated life, base communities, other small communities, and movements. Like the early Christians who met in community, the disciples take part in the life of the Church, and in the encounter with brothers and sisters, living the love of Christ in solidarity, in fraternal life. They are also accompanied and encouraged by the community and its shepherds as they mature in the life of the Spirit.

e) *Mission*: As they get to know and love their Lord, disciples experience the need to share with others their joy at being sent, at going to the world to proclaim Jesus Christ, dead and risen, to make real the love and service in the person of the neediest, in short, to build the Kingdom of God. Mission is inseparable from discipleship, and hence it must not be understood as a stage subsequent to formation, although it is carried out in different ways, depending on one's own vocation and on the moment in human and Christian maturation at which the person stands. (Aparecida, p93 – 94)

The above summary and definition of processes derived from Aparecida: The Encounter with Jesus Christ, Conversion, Discipleship, Communion and Mission is not necessarily exclusive of other possible processes.
8. Places of formation for missionary disciples?

- The family, first school of faith
- Parishes
- Small ecclesial communities
- Ecclesial movements and new communities
- Seminaries and houses of religious formation
- Catholic education: Catholic educational institutions
- Universities and advanced institutes of Catholic education

(Aparecida, p100 – 111)

The above are congregational places, that is, where communities congregate for a common purpose, and missionary discipleship and evangelization are our purpose – ‘For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Mt 18:20).
9. Questions for conversation and discussion in parishes

The following are proposed as questions to anchor dialogue, conversation and discussion in parishes. They are not the be all and end all, but merely a guideline to help focus discussion and reflection.

a) How does your parish define or understand missionary discipleship and evangelization in your context?

b) How can this understanding be translated into action?

c) What is the relationship between evangelization, discipleship, mission, and holiness?

d) What are the major concerns and challenges that the parish thinks should be addressed under missionary discipleship and evangelization?

e) How do you think these can these be addressed?
SELECTED REFERENCES:

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- *Christus Vivit* (Christ is Alive)
- *Code of Canon Law*