

HOSPITALITY AND

Missionary Outreach

In his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, Pope Francis called for the “reform of the Church in her missionary outreach” (17). A “pastoral and missionary conversion” (25), he stated, is needed “on every level” (27). We cannot achieve holiness by separating ourselves from others. Missionary Outreach challenges parishes to “go forth” to move beyond the four walls of the church boundaries and to encounter Christ in our neighbor.



Pope John Paul II in his papal encyclical *Redemptoris missio (The Mission of the Redeemer)* lists a number of missionary outreach paths. All missionary outreach activities proclaim the Good News. Here are a few forms:

- **WITNESS** (“Preach always. When necessary use words” St. Francis)
- **PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD** (faith formation, testimony, faith sharing...)
- **PRAYER** (Patron Saint of missionaries, St. Therese of Lisieux)
- **INTERRELIGIOUS AND SECULAR DIALOGUE** (Bring God to the public square)
- **CHARITY/SOCIAL JUSTICE** (Proclaiming God’s love through concrete actions)

REFLECT

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. [Matthew 28:19-20](#)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. [James 2:14-17](#)

True holiness makes us disciples of Jesus and missionaries of his gospel. [Call to Holiness, Bishop Jaime Soto](#)

I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. [Evangelii Gaudium, 27](#)

Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. [Evangelii Gaudium, 270](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Pope Francis encourages parishes to re-organize parishes to be more outward directed missionary focused. How can we organize our parishes to better move beyond the four walls of the parish doors (i.e. charitable ministries, ministries for social justice and respect life, ecumenical/interreligious events, small Christian communities)?
2. How do we make sure that our missionary outreach puts Jesus at the center of our missionary enterprise? Is Christ at the center of all of our outreach efforts? What are some ways that we can keep Christ at the center of our missionary outreach ministries?