

Pope Francis Style Of Missionary Discipleship

Proactive: "... a ministry that goes forth "we cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings"

Focused on the Good News: "keep in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man ..." (#128)

Magnanimous: "... open to all; inclusive; merciful; humble. never closes itself off, never retreats into its own security, never opts for rigidity and defensiveness." (#45-#47)

Gives Priority to the Poor: "...Today and always, 'the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel.'"(Benedict XVI) #48

Personal: "...we are fulfilled when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names." (#274) "...we are called to also to be their (the poor) friends..." (#198)

Convinced of Our Sacred Calling: "...we have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, freeing. etc." (#273)

Question: As you now Bring Mission Home, which dimension of Pope Francis' vision of Pastoral Ministry for Missionary Disciples will be most challenging for you to realize?

Bringing Mission Home



A Meditation and Study Booklet

(For private use only)

Prepared by:

Maryknoll Third Wave Ministry Team

May 2017

View Videos and Print PDF Booklet at:
<http://www.mission-resources.com/>

"One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church's mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as Missionary Disciples as a leaven of the Gospel in our world."

Pope Francis Homily: Philadelphia 2015

INTRODUCTION: BRINGING MISSION HOME

Pope Francis challenges all of us to be Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ: *"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."*

Short term Mission Immersion Programs serve as a catalyst for people to be missionary. And home is where the majority of people who have engaged in a Mission Immersion Program are called to serve.

It is in their communities, among the people they are surrounded by, that God has placed their mission field. During a Mission Immersion Program we are awakened and unleashed to live out our calling to go into the entire world and spread the good news – starting with our own communities.

An immersion program acts as a training and equipping tool to do this. When people choose to go out of their country on mission and make relationships with people who live differently than they do -- on return, they are prone to feel the Spirit and the Lord's love more than ever before in their lives..

Their mission experience becomes a launching pad, so to speak, to even greater spiritual heights and commitment. They are called to put into practice on the home-front what others have given them in another culture. They are called to a radical faithfulness to *Bring Mission Home*.

In this module we want to treat six core issues that will help you sustain your experience as Missionary Disciple as you now return home:

- [1] Take Aways
- [2] Called to Mission Spirituality
- [3] Called to Engage in On Going Solidarity\
- [4] Called to Make an Option for the Poor
- [5] Called to Speak to My World
- [6] Called to Be a Missionary Disciple

1. TAKE AWAYS

No one returns from a Mission Immersion program empty handed. Everyone returns home repeating the often quoted cliché *"I received much more than I gave."*

Though somewhat hackneyed, this is so true. That is why it is not too difficult for participants in short term mission immersion programs to know and talk about their **TAKE AWAYS**.

Everyone takes away something from their mission experience. For one, a TAKE AWAY may be a new realization, understanding, clarity; for another it might be a new decision, determination or new plan of action.

A TAKE AWAY might be a new attitude; a new learning; a new feeling; a new appreciation. A person's TAKE AWAYS are as varied as the people with whom they have shared their experience.

Another way of talking about this is to say that in every mission experience (be it for a day, a week or a year) God exhorts and calls us to BE more and to DO more.

We need to attune ourselves to this calling and realize that God has an ancient, active purpose going on everywhere around the globe. Our job while we were on mission was to learn how God has already been working in that culture and among that people where we felt called to go.

Now, on our return from mission, we need to reinforce our learned experience. We need to become more humble, more prayerful, and more present to what is going around us.

We should challenge ourselves to become involved in ministries that will cement our learned experience from mission.

Mission is not only over-there - it is also here and now. We are called to be Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ always and everywhere.

Pope Francis says it so well: *"Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries', but rather that we are always 'Missionary Disciples'."*

So now we must continue to live our missionary vocation as we *"Bring Mission Home."*

Question: *What are some of the TAKE AWAYS from your last mission immersion?*

2. CALLED TO A MISSION SPIRITUALITY

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis reiterates the teaching of earlier popes that *"Evangelization Is The Task Of The Church."*

As such, he says that we, as "Missionary Disciples" are called to imbue in our lives a "mission spirituality."

A mission spirituality is a kind of "framework" or "set" of values, symbols, doctrines, attitudes and practices which persons or a community attempt to make their own in order to be able to cope with a particular situation, to grow in the love of God and self-transcendence, and/or to accomplish a particular task in life or in the world.

A spirituality, in other words, is like a reservoir from which a people can draw to motivate action, to keep on track, to bolster commitment, to avoid discouragement when times get rough. In still other words, it is a way of tapping into the infinite, life-giving, refreshing and empowering presence of God, so that people's life can be lived in grace, gratitude and growth.

According to Pope Francis, mission spirituality has seven dimensions which all of us as Missionary Disciples strive to practice in our daily lives as we respond to their missionary vocation at home!

First: We are Called to Be filled with Holy Spirit: that is: *"be transfigured by God's presence."* (EG #259)

Second: We are Called to Engage in Prayer and Work: *"Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work."* (#262) ... *"without prayer our work can easily*

become meaningless; however, prayer can sometimes become an excuse for not offering one's life in mission." (EG #262)

Third: We Must Be clear About Our Motivation: *"True Missionary Disciples who never cease to be disciples, know that Jesus walks with them, speaks to them, breathes with them, works with them. They sense Jesus alive with them in the midst of their missionary enterprise."* (EG #264)

Fourth: We Know Ourselves to be About the Kingdom of God: We understand that *"the Gospel is about the Kingdom of God."* (EG #180) ... Pope Francis is strong in saying that *"we must not see our response to God simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need."* (EG 180) – rather, we are about nothing less than being agents of the Christ, intent on bringing about God's Kingdom - here and now.

We do this well just as Jesus did it in his time - developing a close relationship with people. It is in the intimacy of friendship that we share the gospel with both those whom we encountered on mission as well as with those we come into contact when we return home.

Fifth: We Are Called To Burn With Passion For Others And Passion For Jesus: *"We need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to peoples' lives; mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people."* (EG 268)

Sixth: We Find Jesus In The Faces Of Others: *"The gospel tells us to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy."* (EG #88)

Seventh: Missionary Disciples Of Jesus Know Themselves To Be Accompanied By Mary: *"Mary is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us."* (EG #286)

Question: *Which of the seven dimensions of Mission Spirituality do I need to especially attend to as I Bring Mission Home?*

3. Called to Engage in Ongoing Solidarity

At a time of dramatic global changes and challenges, Catholics in the United States face unique responsibilities and opportunities.

As members of a universal Church that transcends national boundaries, we have been consistently called to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world. As Catholics and Americans we are uniquely called to this global solidarity.

We can honestly say that in many ways our community of faith already practices solidarity every day.

- Missionaries preach the Gospel and celebrate the Eucharist.
- Catholic relief workers feed the hungry and promote development.
- Our prayers, donations, and volunteers assist the Church in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa.
- The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and other Catholic groups defend human life and human rights, promote global justice, and pursue peace.

However, these international institutions, programs, and collections have not yet fully awakened a true sense of solidarity among many Catholics in the United States.

Our parishes often act as islands of local religious activity rather than as parts of the worldwide Mystical Body of Christ. At the parish level, where we most directly experience Church, we need to integrate more fully the universal and international dimensions of Catholic discipleship.

The Church's teaching on global justice and peace is a challenge for every believer and every Catholic community of faith.

The demands of solidarity require not another program, but greater awareness and integration into the ongoing life of the parish. A parish reaching beyond its own members and beyond national boundaries is a truly "catholic" parish.

An important role for the parish is to challenge and encourage one another and every believer to greater global solidarity.

Cain's question, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Gn 4:9) has global implications and is a special challenge for our time, touching not one but all of our sisters and brothers.

As members of God's one human family, we acknowledge our duties to people in far-off places. We accept God's call to us to care for all human life and for all creation.

Baptism, confirmation, and continuing participation in the body of Christ call us to action for "*the least among us*" without regard for boundaries or borders.

According to Pope John Paul II, solidarity with the human family consists in "*a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.*"

As our Bishops have clearly stated, "*solidarity is action on behalf of the one human family, calling us to help overcome the divisions in our world.*"

Pope Francis during his visit to the Brazilian people in July, 2013 spoke with conviction: "*never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity!*"

He went on to say: "*The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not, I repeat, not what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: rather, it is the culture of solidarity that does so; This culture of solidarity means seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.*"

Question: *As you now Bring Mission Home, what is one or two specific Actions on Behalf of Justice you might do as you respond to the call to Engage in Global Solidarity?*

4. CALLED TO MAKE AN OPTION FOR THE POOR

As Catholics, we are called to make a preferential option for the poor. We can follow Jesus' example by making a specific effort to defend and promote the dignity of the poor and vulnerable.

One of the main TAKE AWAYS that we experience from an overseas mission immersion program is a stunning awareness of

the physical poverty of the people we have met and with whom we have become friends.

As we *Bring Mission Home*, we need to reflect on the reasons behind their poverty and challenge ourselves to a new way of living. In this way we can maintain our relationship with our new friends by identifying with them, honoring them, and learning from them

Pope Francis tells us *"We are called to find Christ in the poor, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friend, to listen to them, to speak for them. . ."*

In his Apostolic Exhortation: "The Joy of the Gospel" Pope Francis captures much of our feelings: *"How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich!"*

If we have learned anything from our short mission experience, we now know that *"each person and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society."* (#187)

"Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone ... will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk." (#207)

As a Church we believe, with Pope Francis, that *"there is an inseparable bond between faith and the poor."* (#48) *"An authentic faith, which is never comfortable or completely personal, always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it."* (#183)

Pope Francis tells us that *"welfare projects should be considered merely temporary responses to poverty."*

He further says, that *"As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by attacking the structural causes of*

inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems. Inequality is the root of social ills." (#202)

As Pope John XXIII said, in order to respond effectively as Catholics to the problem of the poor, *"we must become champions of education, access to health care, employment, and a just wage."*

When we go on mission, even on a short term mission program, we must bring home a new sense of urgency, a new sense of commitment to our new-found friends.

One way we can express our commitment is by living a simple life-style in solidarity with the poor of the world. A simple lifestyle does not mean simply cutting back and trying to live the same life only with less money. It goes way beyond HOW we live, it is more about THE WAY we live and how we interact with the world around us.

Living simply is about happiness, contentment, going outside our comfort zone, accepting responsibility for our actions and getting priorities right. Voluntary simplicity results not only in a better life, but also a better you.

Another TAKE AWAY that we bring home from mission is a sense of community. Did we not notice that the people with whom we visited and shared our lives value not only their faith, but also their families and their community? This is the gift they gave us. We are called to embrace their gift of faith, family and community. We can no longer do it all alone, isolated from one another.

Material richness has a tendency to isolate us, to cause us to focus on what we have - on our desires, on our future. What we learned from our friends on mission is that poverty unites us and urges us to find common solutions.

Therefore if we live these values of faith, family, and community, we place ourselves in solidarity with their poverty and accept their humble gift.

When we Bring Mission Home, here are some practical ideas for service to the poor and vulnerable that we can focus on which will keep us in solidarity with our new friends:

1. Maintain communication with mission friends via facebook, skype, exchange of photos.
2. Share missionary experience with Church community, family, and friends at work or school.
3. Volunteer with fellow missionaries at a homeless shelter, or elder care home.
4. Collect food to donate to a charity such as Operation Rice Bowl.
5. Start a clothing drive and donate clothing to an organization that distributes clothes to those who are poor or homeless.
6. Meet regularly with missionary friends to learn more about the products we purchase; investigate where and who makes them, and under what conditions they are made.
7. Save money to give to a good charity or needy family, especially a vulnerable immigrant.
8. Read newspapers and news magazines to find out how local, state, and national governments could be doing more to help those who are poor.
9. As a missionary group, write a letter to the representative of our district expressing concern about those who have inadequate access to health care, a job, etc.
10. Along with others in our mission group, join a project to benefit the poor in our own parish.

Solidarity with the poor is not only humbling, but leads to a new way of life. As Christians we are called to walk together with our brothers and sisters and with Jesus who was poor and who himself made an option for the poor.

Question: *As you now Bring Mission Home what will be your basic plan for an option for the poor?*

5. CALLED TO SPEAK TO MY WORLD

As baptized Christians, all of us are called to be missionary, to go out, to proclaim the Good News in the name of Jesus. We are challenged to cross borders, to become involved with others, to share our faith, to experience God's love and justice with others.

Mission is a process. It means that crossing borders, leaving our comfort zone - usually our HOMELAND... where we live, work, and go to school... we enter into another culture, into WONDERLAND, where we meet and form relationships with people different from us.

After a time with them, we return to our own cultural reality - to NEWFOUNDLAND - which we now find to be somewhat different since our going out; our perspective has changed.

All of us have experienced this process. Our mission now is to *Bring Mission Home* and keep our experience ALIVE. So the question is: How do we do this? How do we keep MISSION ALIVE?

When we return home from a mission immersion program we all say the same thing: *"I got more out of it than they did."* What we mean is that we were impacted by the immersion experience even more than the people we set out to be with.

We ask ourselves, *"What was it that impacted us?"* No matter where we served, it's usually a combination of different elements: intense poverty, incredible joy, unique culture, new friendships, and a powerful experience of God.

These elements create a unique "re-entry" experience after we get home from our mission immersion experience. What is key to keeping our mission experience alive when we bring it home is to embrace our experience and know that it can help us grow in maturity and in faith.

One of the first experiences we may feel when we get home is exhaustion. Remember, after a two-week mission experience, we return exhausted. We've traveled a long way, made new friends, played with children, stayed up late, and got up early.

So what are some of the things we might do to help ourselves and benefit more deeply from our mission experience?

- **Take Time To Rest:** Exhaustion is normal. It's important to give ourselves a day or two to recover. If possible, it would be good to stay home for a day - give our mind and body a chance to catch up with all that we experienced. Life will eventually get back to normal but we don't need to rush it.

- **Be Patient With The People We Meet At Home:** Some people at home will not understand what we saw and experienced. It's frustrating. What's even more frustrating is that our culture doesn't seem to care. No one seems to care about the orphans we visited in Guatemala or the need for safe drinking water for the poor in Honduras.
- **Remember That Our Eyes Were Opened:** While we might experience disinterest from our friends or school mates, it is crucial to remember that our mission immersion experience opened OUR eyes. That's what counts. Only we are responsible for the way that we live going forward. Hopefully, as we live a changed life in response to what we experienced, our friends and family will notice and want to join us. However, attempting to change everyone else as soon as we get home will only end in frustration and disappointment.
- **Forget or Change:** Once we are back at school or work, things will finally settle down. We will resolve the tension we have experienced at coming home from mission in one of two ways. We will either "*forget*" what God has revealed to us by resuming our normal routine, or we will "*change.*" Pray constantly during this transition time. It is vital to resist the urge to let ourselves simply return to normal. We don't have to move to El Salvador or start a non-profit organization overnight; but we do need to do something. Remember those incredible experiences and feelings from our mission experience? Don't let those go. Let those motivate you to live differently.
- **Learn Now To Live Intentionally:** We don't have to be in a developing nation to live intentionally. What steps can we take to live more intentionally - at home, school, and work? Can we live a simpler lifestyle, identifying with our mission friends overseas? Pray constantly and ask God to show us how He wants us to live intentionally going forward. Living intentionally means to not forget our experience. The new friends that we made expect us to honor them by remembering them.
- **Keep a Journal:** Journaling is an excellent way to organize our thoughts about our experience and the people we became

friends with. Writing can often be a good way to meditate. If nothing else, it helps us to record our thoughts and emotions so that we can come back to them later.

- **Share Your Experience With Others:** When we are ready, we should reach out to those who have had similar mission experiences. The questions we have now are too large to conquer on our own, and we'll need others for support.

Try to find one or two people who have been through a similar adjustment and stick with them. Ask them how they adjusted to bringing mission home. A commitment to experience a community is one of the gifts we received overseas. Showing photos is a good way for us to keep our mission experience alive.

We might consider scheduling a meeting with the missionary team who accompanied us on mission soon after our return to share experiences. At this meeting we should share our photos, share our stories, and share our memories.

We might also think of producing a short video for our parish. We should ask our parish priest or parish mission council to schedule a time for a "witnessing session". We should be proud to introduce them to our new friends abroad.

- **Keep In Touch With Your Friends in Mission:** Also, maintaining contact with our new-found mission friends through Facebook, Whatsapp, or Messenger is a good way to keep alive our experience of a close community.
- **Engage in Projects to Bring About Lasting Change:** We also should consider working on a project with our fellow missionaries that promotes justice for immigrants, work for the unemployed, or care for the elderly and homeless. As Pope Francis said, "*Jesus' command to "feed my sheep" means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty.*"
- **Be Patient With Yourself:** We have to realize that change is a lifelong process. It is easy to get discouraged seeing how similar our lives look before the mission experience and after it. This may cause us to doubt the validity of our experiences and convictions. Our mission experience was only one part of our journey, one part of life that is shaping

us into who we are and who we want to be. There is much more to come.

Bringing Mission Home is a challenge because it requires a commitment to form community, to maintain communication with mission friends, and to engage in those projects and issues that affect those with whom we lived and worked. As we meet this challenge, we will not only have grown in the values which our friends abroad gave us, but we will have passed them on to our family and friends at home.

Questions: *Now that you return from your Mission Immersion program, (1) what are you experiencing as most challenging? (2) what are you finding to be most nourishing?*

6. CALLED TO BE A MISSIONARY DISCIPLE

Oftentimes we go to a “foreign land” and experience a wonderful time in “overseas mission.” We often feel like the apostles on Mount Tabor saying “Lord, let us build three tents and stay here!” But sooner or later we realize that we must *Bring Mission Home*.

We hear again those strong words of our Holy Father: *“The Church is missionary by her very nature – therefore, in virtue of baptism all are called to be Missionary Disciples.”* (cf: EG: #120)

During his homily in Philadelphia in 2015, Pope Francis told the attendees that *“One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church’s mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in our world.”*

He told us in the Joy of the Gospel that he himself is clear about being a Missionary Disciple: *“My mission is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self.”*

Our faith in Christ is what motivates Missionary Disciples to reach out to others: *“proclaiming and bringing his salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be*

encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way” (EG: #114)

The task of Missionary Disciples can be summed up in one word: *“Evangelization”* Pope Francis quotes Pope Paul VI who said *“Evangelizing is the grace and vocation proper to the Church ... She exists in order to evangelize.”* (Paul VI EN #14)

Pope Paul VI outlines two distinct ways to evangelize: First by WITNESS: *“The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission.”* [Paul VI: EN #41/#42] And the second way to evangelize is by PROCLAMATION: *“The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth are not proclaimed.”* [Paul VI in Evangelii Nuntiandi ##22]

When it comes to proclamation, Pope Francis makes it clear that the principal proclamation is: *“Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He lives at your side everyday to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”* (EG: #164).

Pope Francis explains that Evangelization/Proclamation is *“everyday preaching.”* *“There is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet... This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home.”* (EG: #127)

Process For Everyday Preaching:

1. **Personal Dialogue:** engage the other person in speaking and sharing his/her joys, hopes and concerns, or heartfelt needs.
2. **Word of God:** bring up God’s word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a bible story.
3. **Reiterate the Fundamental Message:** always keep in mind the fundamental message of the Gospel as enunciated in the Joy of the Gospel (EG: #164): *“On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over.*
4. **Pray Together:** if the circumstances are right, this missionary encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns which the person may have expressed.