

Mission Connections: Special Catechetical Leaders Edition

Youth Connecting in Mission

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Missionary Discipleship: Healing Lepers

This past Sunday's readings are great at helping us think about what it means to be missionary disciples; in the Gospel we heard of Christ healing a leper, a man considered "unclean" or unworthy by his community, and therefore abandoned and left completely alone in his suffering. And Jesus challenges this by healing him.

As "imitators of Christ" as Paul calls us, we too are called to heal the "lepers" of our time. Who are these "lepers?" The poor, outcast, marginalized, hungry, prejudiced against, oppressed, AIDS sufferers, the bullied, displaced persons, those without voice or community to care for them. And how do we make them "clean?" Welcome them, stand up for them, care for their needs, pray for them, get-to-know them. We heal when *we stand with others in their suffering!*

We hear that after being healed, the man was sent to see the priest; this would be done so that the man could re-enter his community. Being able to be part of the community again meant having even *more* people who would be there to stand with him in life – in the good or the bad. Humans were made for this community, and Christ helps the man be fully who he is by allowing him to be a part of a community once again.

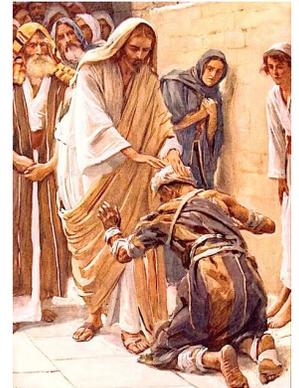
My favorite explanation of mission is: "Mission takes place wherever people interact with people, seeking to overcome all that separates them from one another and from GOD." Mission happens when we help ourselves and others be a part of *community!* By breaking down stereotypes, by building relationships, by helping those whose situations keep them apart, we are doing what Christ did when he healed the man

and helped him be a part of a community of love and care again.

And why did the leper need to be a part of the community again? Not only because his *inherent dignity* as a creation of GOD says he deserves that, but also so that he could help bring others to Christ's love too. The leper in the Gospel told everyone about what had happened, and as a result Christ couldn't get away from others who were seeking healing too. This tells us that the leper didn't necessarily go to the rich and well-off or "important" people of the community he re-entered; he was sharing about Christ's love with others like him – those in need, those on the fringes.

At the very end of the Gospel passage we hear that people came to Jesus "from everywhere." People come to *us* from everywhere too – all places, races, walks of life, economic status, family make-up, political preferences, ideologies, etc. Will we stand with them all, as Christ does, in their suffering? Will we help heal their "leprosy," whatever it is that is keeping them from a community of love and care? Will we help build a "community" that includes everyone and every place, seeing ourselves as truly one human family, by living as witnesses to the good news of GOD's Love and sharing it especially with those in need?

Will we be missionary disciples? The leper was. We can be too!



Give it a Try!

Try incorporating these resources and activities into your ministry.



Mission Ed. Resources & Ideas:

Lent is a great time to go deeper into our call to be in mission! Take for example the annual "Catholic Relief Services" appeal, which supports the work of six organizations: CRS, Migration Refugee Services, CLINIC, Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, Holy Father's Relief Fund, and the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church. Resources and promotion materials are available at: www.usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/catholic-relief-services-collection/collection

Want to invite your community to pray for those in need this Lent? Try out these free "Lenten Prayers for Hungry People" table tents, which include scripture readings, prayers and action steps for each of the five

weeks of Lent and Holy Week. Order or download yours at bread.org/lent

If you're looking for a way to engage 7-12th grade youth, invite them to participate in the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)'s Multimedia Youth Contest "Creating on the Margins." This program invites youth to learn and reflect on poverty in the U.S. through wonderful free resources they provide; students then submit both an essay and a creative work (can be any artistic medium). For contest details, resources and more information, visit: www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/multimedia-youth-contest Be sure to notify us if you are participating!



Don't Forget:



Feb 14: Ash Wednesday; Lent and Rice Bowl begin

Mar 8: Int'l Women's Day

Mar 11: Catholic Relief Services Collection in parishes

Mar 13: Joint Religious Legislative Coalition's Day on the Hill

Mar 22: World Water Day

Mar 31: CCHD Multimedia Youth Contest deadline

Words of Wisdom: "All of us who are baptized are missionary disciples. We are called to become a living Gospel in the world." (Pope Francis)