



Living the Faith – Step 4

Missionary Disciples

Aim

With the help of scripture and tradition, the developed wisdom of the Church, to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus today.

Resources needed

Leaders

- *Come and See notes*
- *PPT laptop and projector or TV*
- *Prayer focus items*
- *Large clover cut outs and pens*
- *Songs*

For Young People

- *Journals and hand out*

Prayer Focus

Expressions of our belief:

Green Cloth – *Ordinary time*

Shamrock Plant or – *paper leaves*

Vine leaves or grapes – *Jesus the*

Candle – *three wick, white, cream or green*

Catechism – *the wisdom and tradition of the Church*

Dove of Peace - *cut outs for each person*

Liturgical Link

Though all the baptised share the role of Priest, Prophet and King, only those ordained ministers can confer the sacraments.

Overview

- Three into one
- Missionary discipleship
- Jesus three-fold mission
- Living the mission today
- Prayerful Reflection

Preparation by Catechists

- *Familiarity with content and resources*
- *Be ready to share about personal gifts and unexpected events*
- *Pray for the young people and leaders*

Scripture Passages

- Hebrews 1:1-3 Priest, Prophet, King
- John 14:1-31 Last discourse part 1
- John 15,16:1-33 Last discourse part 2
- John 17:1-26 Last discourse part 3

Tenets of Faith (Faith Formation)

- Three Persons, one God
- Missionary disciples
- Jesus the way, truth and life
- The role of Priest, Prophet and King

Gathering

Welcome and Overview

- Thank the young people for coming back.
- Give a brief reminder of the key points from the last gathering.
- Offer an overview and the aim for this fourth step

Introductory activity

Activity – *Three into one*

The last step involved identification of gifts. Today we think about ourselves as being multi-dimensional.

- Hand each person three of the clover cutouts, different colours if possible.
- Invite the young people to choose three different aspects of their lives For example: family, student or worker, friendship group, club member or volunteer.
- Ask them to write these on the leaves and identify three different roles played in each context. Provide examples if needed.
- Invite the young people to place the leaves on the floor / table in front of them and to consider which of the roles they feel most at home
- Ask them to identify if there are any roles they can dismiss as unimportant?
- Gather feedback and respond as appropriate to help explain the mystery of the Trinity – three persons in one God.

Use of the shamrock leaf to explain the mystery of the Trinity to the Irish is attributed to St Patrick. The three-wick candle symbolises the Trinity. Representing light, candles are a sign of Christ's light and presence. The three-wick candle reminds us of the three persons of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, though represented here as three flames, are indeed one, as is the candle.

As the information on the leaves depicts, we too are complex individuals. We have lots of different relationships and take on a variety of roles in different contexts.

Another analogy that might help us appreciate the different dimensions of one substance is to think of water. Depending on the circumstances water in its liquid form can be still and quite it can flow gently or become a raging torrent. When falling from the sky it can be a gentle mist, a heavy downpour, snowflakes or hailstones – both of which can solidify as ice. Ice itself can cool or in the extreme burn, when it melts it returns to its liquid state. Water can also become a gas, and float in the air, but also return to its former state when hitting a cold surface.

For us the different dimensions of life are held together through the Spirit within us and our relationships with Jesus and the Father. It is through being bonded to and keeping at the centre of our lives the three persons of the Trinity, that we are empowered to fulfil our roles as missionary disciples.

Our opening prayer acknowledges this and the truth about the eternal nature of God.

Opening Prayer

Prayer focus - refer to items and explain their significance here and as appropriate later

Prayerful acknowledgement – adapted from A Wee Worship Group, Wild Goose Publication, 1999

In the opening responses we acknowledge the nature of our triune God and in song praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Leader In the beginning before time, before people, before the world began,

All God was.

Leader Here and now among us, beside us, enlisting the people of earth for the purposes of heaven,

All God is.

Leader In the future, when we have turned to dust and all we know has found its fulfilment,

All God will be.

Leader Not denying the world, but delighting in it, not condemning the world, but redeeming it, through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit,

All God was, God is, God will be.

Song Trinity Song: Father we adore you - Terry Coelho

<https://youtu.be/wMp5Cfku7R4> (words are in the any step resources)

Missionary Disciples

Activity – What is a Missionary Discipleship?

At the start of the 'Come journey we explored the notion of missionary discipleship. Hopefully over time our understanding and appreciation of what is a missionary disciple has grown.

- Ask the young people to share in pairs their understanding of the term missionary discipleship and, and the impact it has on the life of Christians.
- Invite general sharing amongst the group and help to clarify as necessary.

Remind young people that while a daunting prospect, the call to discipleship is achievable through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Sacraments, our connection with scripture and the support of the Church Community.

Explain to the young people that the mission of the Church is to make God's love known through the message of the Gospel, which we call The Good News. The news we discover is that Jesus restored the relationship between God and humanity, won victory over death securing the promise of eternal life to those who believe this truth.

Followers of Jesus are called to be disciples of Christ, ones who learn from and try to be like Jesus and are willing to continue his mission.

For Jesus discipleship meant radical inclusion and radical equality. Each person is called to take on the role to the best of their ability, their efforts need to be valued and acknowledged as making a contribution to the whole.

The Church has long since referred to the baptised as disciples and missionaries. The phrase Missionary Disciple came into focus in '*The Joy of the Gospel*' [Evangelii Gaudium, November 2013] the writing of Pope Francis (known as an Apostolic Exhortation) in which the Holy Father shares ways in which Christians are called to proclaim the Gospel in our time.

Being a disciple is a challenge. Disciples need to be prepared to go against the flow. Each baptised person is called to the best of our ability, help to promote inclusion and equality for all, just as Jesus did. This means that at times we even though our words and actions might be unpopular with some and seem at odds with much of society we stand by what is right and true. Such is the role of a missionary disciple today.

Reflection activity

- Working in 2's or 3's ask young people to consider,
 - What are major flaws within society today that the Church needs to contend with?
 - What, or where, are the spaces into which the Gospel message needs to be taken?
- Encourage young people to record of responses in journals in readiness to share with the group.

Christ the beating heart of the Church

The above responses may connect in some way with the sentiments expressed by Archbishop Costelloe, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, 2019. The Archbishop reminded us that "*Christ is the beating heart of the Church,*" and that each of us is called to put Christ at the centre of everything we do as individuals and as the Church.

He also acknowledged that the greatest challenge facing our Church today is to return the Church to Christ and to return Christ to his Church. This we can only do by being "*the living body of Christ, the living Sacrament of his healing, renewing and saving presence in the world.*" Recalling the sentiments of Pope Francis, the Archbishop reminds us that "*we are called by God to be not inflictors but healers of people's wounds; not destroyers but warmers of people's hearts, for this is exactly what Jesus was and still seeks to be in and through His Church*".

We now turn to scripture to help us consider what, in practice, this might mean for us as Missionary Disciples.

Scripture and Reflection

The Mission of Jesus

The Catechism makes clear the role of the baptised to be involved in the three-fold mission (office) of Jesus. [CCC 871-872]

*“The Christian faithful, incorporated into Christ by their Baptism and made members of God's People, share in Christ's threefold office as **Priest, Prophet, and King**. They are called to exercise God's mission for his Church according to their state (Canon 204).*

Because all share in the baptismal rebirth in Christ, there is a true equality in dignity and activity whereby all cooperate in building up the Body (Canon 208).”

Activity – Priest, Prophet and King

- Place three large sheets of paper, in the shared space each with one of the words at the centre,
- Invite young people to bring to mind words, symbols and images relating to each word that might help explain the meaning of this three-fold mission of Christ.
- Ask the young people to write these on the sheets.
- Gather the group and unpack the responses. Seek clarification where necessary and make a link to the following scripture reading.

Hebrews 1:1-3

While there are plenty of references to Christ as Priest, Prophet and King in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, this short passage identifies all three together.

1. *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,*
2. *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*
3. *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*

Explain the terms to the young people:

Priest through his ministry Jesus demonstrates the importance of servant leadership

Prophet as prophet, Jesus is the truth, he calls us back to his Father

King as king, Jesus shepherds us, leading us on the right path, the way to new life

A simple way of understanding this is by remembering Jesus saying, I am the way, (as king), the truth, (as prophet) and the life, (as priest).

This threefold office or mission is not only a rich way to depict the Lord; it is also a description of the role of all the baptised, including us. Catholic theology makes clear that baptism is much more than a symbolic sign of belonging to the Church. It incorporates a person into Christ, so that s/he becomes part of his mystical body, and so share in the mission Jesus gave to the Church.

It is for this reason that baptism includes the anointing with oil; just as, in the Old Testament, priests, prophets, and kings were anointed upon assumption of their offices. The same still happens today at ceremonies where Kings and Queens are installed.

Adapted from Catholic News Agency article by Bishop Robert Barron, 2014

Going Deeper

Living the Mission today-Option 1

(Option2 – Prophets of our time Step 4 can be located in the Resource section)

To help us explore what this mission looks like let us return to St John's Gospel and Jesus' final address to the disciples before the last supper and the events that followed.

John 14:1-31 part 1 - Peace and the Paraclete

Read from John 14:1 – 14 during which Jesus tells the disciples he is the way the truth and the life.

- Aware of the context, invite the young people to listen to the reading and to reflect on:
 - the words and images that remain with them.
 - the relationship between Jesus and the disciples.
 - the message being conveyed about mission.
- Encourage young people to record responses in their journals and ready to be shared with the group.

Explain to the young people that aware of the troubled times ahead, Jesus begins by saying 'Do not let your hearts be troubled' also interpreted as 'believe in God and in me'.

In response to the questions by Thomas and Philip Jesus gives another **I AM** statement, - 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life' then makes clear the relationship he has with the Father.

Jesus assures that those who truly believe in him will be able to follow his ways and continue his mission – anything they ask in his name will be given. Again, Jesus promises the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth that will remain with them, and whom we are later told, will teach them everything.

In response to another question, Jesus, in the next part of the text, stresses the centrality of love, the disciples must love one another, and be loved by the Father.

Adapted from the New Testament Nicholas King, Kevin Mayhew Publication, 2004

The Priestly Role

As the way the truth and the life, Jesus leads us to the Father, he is the bridge-builder: a term used in ancient Roman times to describe the role of the **Priest**.

- Invite the young people to consider their 'priestly role'.
- Invite the young people to ponder on the following questions.
 - Are there people amongst my current circles for whom I need be a bridge builder?
 - Are there changes I need to make to my daily routine to enhance my prayer life and strengthen my relationship with God?
- Encourage young people to record responses in their journals and ready to be shared with the group.

Explain to the young people that an important aspect of our priestly mission is to be peacemakers, people who help reconcile divisions amongst families, communities and cultures. When any of these groups rediscover a link to God, they find an inner peace and healing.

To take on this priestly role the baptised must be in harmony with God. This comes from devotion to prayer, reception of the Sacraments and developing a close relationship with the living Christ, in whose name our identity, purpose and mission is found.

Adapted from the Catholic News Agency article by Bishop Robert Barron 2014

John 15:1-33 part 2 – do you belong to Jesus or the world

Having made clear that he is *the way the truth and the life*, Jesus lays down a serious challenge to the disciples, - you either belong to me, or to the world. Make your choice.

- Aware of the context, invite the young people to listen to the reading [abridged version, from the resources section] and then to reflect on:
 - the words and images that remain with them.
 - aspects of their personal life where pruning might be needed in order to be a true disciple. What will be the cost?
 - the message being conveyed about mission.
- Encourage young people to record responses in their journals and be ready to share aspects of these with the group

Explain to the young people that the passage begins with the powerful image of Jesus as the vine, which has a double point. First the believer is invited to belong to Jesus, and second, such belonging requires a pruning that will be uncomfortable, and challenging. It therefore requires sacrifice. While the importance of love and joy are made clear, Jesus makes the link between loving and laying down our lives for our friends.

To help the disciples cope with the opposition they are to face, he again promises the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to enable the disciples to remain in touch with the Father, and bear witness to Christ.

The questions asked by the disciples again demonstrate the lack of understanding of what Jesus is saying to them. Finally, the penny begins to drop. The disciples acknowledge belief in Jesus, who 'has come forth from God'. Jesus then warns his followers that they will run away and, despite the agony that is to come, Jesus ends on a positive note '*courage for I have conquered the world*'.

Adapted from the New Testament, Nichola King, Kevin Mayhew Publication, 2004

The Prophetic Role

In the scriptures, Jesus has been trying to explain his role in fulfilling what has been prophesied. 'They hated me for nothing' is a quote from Psalm 35:19. The Hebrew word for prophet is 'nabi' which has the overtone of a madman. Many of the Old Testament prophets who speak the divine truth to the misguided and unhinged are inevitably dismissed because they are preserved as mad.

Jesus made it clear the same would be experienced by the disciples, as also happened to him. Having been illumined, by the Holy Spirit, the disciples, as prophets, will also go out into the world to be beacons of light.

The same applies to the baptised today. In our increasingly secularised society, such illumination is desperately needed, so the baptised must study well and pray, so they too have the courage to speak.

Adapted from the Catholic News Agency article by Bishop Robert Barron 2014

- Invite the young people to reflect on their 'prophetic role' and consider if:
 - there are people or circumstances close to them, about which they need to speak out?
 - in the Church, or society in general there are concerns which should be challenged.
 - there is an issue they feel passionate enough about to engage with.

John 17:1-26 part 3 – Giving glory to the Son and the Father

Read abridged version, from resources section. This final section of the address to the disciples is more akin to a prayer to the Father.

- Aware of the context, invite the young people to listen to the reading and reflect on:
 - the words and images that remain with them.
 - ways in which their life gives glory to the Father, and to Jesus.
 - the message being conveyed about mission.
- Encourage young people to record responses in their journals and ready to be shared with the group

Explain to the young people that the prayer to the Father has distinct areas of focus: firstly the mutual glory of the Father and Son; prayers for the faithful ones who have been given to Jesus: especially for support when the world turns against them; lastly, for those who will respond to the message spread by the faithful.

Adapted from the New Testament, Nichola King, Kevin Mayhew Publication, 2004

The Kingly Role

Explain to the young people that honour is given to those we respect, not out of fear of duty, but out of love and appreciation for all that they are and do. We give honour to God as the creator of all things, the Father, who brought us into being and whose unconditional love sent the Son to redeem us. His actions also command our love and respect.

Theologically speaking, a king is someone who orders the charisms within a community so as to direct that community toward God. The king needs to coordinate the efforts and talents of a conglomeration of people in order to help them achieve a common purpose, as Jesus did.

* Within our own sphere and realms of competence each baptised person is charged with the kingly role of nurturing and shaping others to participate in the building of God's kingdom. Far from being a personal set of values and devotions, religion is a way of life that demonstrates belief in and conviction to the God who is for all people. Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa are just three examples of individuals who boldly and publicly lived out the kingly role of their baptism.

Adapted from the Catholic News Agency article by Bishop Robert Barron 2014

- Invite the young people to reflect on the following questions or discuss with others.
 - Are there people you know whose life gives glory to the Father, and to Jesus?
 - How is this evident?
 - Might the key to the renewal of society be a new understanding of the meaning of baptism as being to create a priestly, prophetic and kingly people?

Closing Prayer

- Gather in a circle / semi-circle around the prayer focus.
- Have gentle music on in the background.
- Placing the trinity candle in the centre of the group and have laid around these small images of a dove (priest), vine leaf, (prophet) crown, (king) real or paper.
- Invite individuals to sit for a few moments reflect back on the conversations that have taken place and choose the symbol that most resonates with them.
- In turn they offer a prayer that relates to the role of Priest, Prophet or King, laying down the symbol as they do so.

Song

Play the song *The Kingdom of heaven* by Mike Anderson, <https://youtu.be/IGNtmlbp3ZE>
or *City of God* by Dan Chutte https://youtu.be/kXZTYV1Pq_M

Leader We bring these prayers together asking God to hear them and help us on the path to holiness:

Let us pray
Lord God, we thank you for this day and the time spent together.

All We rejoice in it.

Leader May the peace of the Spirit rest in us and all we meet.

All We will seek and promote peace amongst others.

Leader Lord, each day may we strive to do you will.

All We will not offer anything that does not cost us.

Leader May the leaders of our Church and our society guide with justice and truth.

All Enable us to be worthy leaders in our homes, our workplaces and society at large.

Leader Glory be to God who made us, to Christ who saved us and to the Holy Spirit who keeps us in faith.

All As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be word without end. Amen

*Adapted from A Wee Worship Book, Wild Goose Worship Group,
Iona Community, 1999*

Closing Remarks and Next Step

- Invite response to the Step 4 gathering
- Living the Faith Step 5 – **Continuing God's Creation**
- Encourage personal and prayer support of one another and attendance at Mass.