



# MISSION DISCERNMENT

## You've got questions?

### Gifts for a Missionary Life

#### Questions

#### What does it take to be a Missionary?

#### The characteristics of a Missionary Spirituality

Missionaries to foreign lands and in cross-cultural settings deliver the same Good News as their counterparts at home. However their lifestyle, community and personal life, ministries, and service call for these special characteristics in their spirituality. After some personal reflection, see if you see these traits present in your life, and jot them down on your daily journal.

*(from articles by Sr. S. Patenande and Fr. D. Maso)*

#### **Leave the Familiar**

The most obvious aspect of missionary life and spirituality is that it entails leaving our family, our culture, and our people. The adjustment to a new environment can be slow and painful. Beginning missionaries might feel like stripped instruments, unable to play any music at all. But leaving means also being enriched by new experiences, and discover new horizons.

#### **Travel Light**

No doubt, all missionaries carry along their own “baggage.” It may be our education, our personality, our degrees, our securities, our efficiency, our pre-packaged idea of mission, our western culture, and even our first world church experience. On the one hand we can't discard who we are or where we come from. On the other hand, we can't discard that our “baggage” can hinder our service. We should bring only determination to serve and willingness to listen and to be free... to love.

#### **Openness and Flexibility**

As the US Bishops noted, “Even as we go out to other nations to announce the Good News, we must remain open to the voice of the Gospel speaking to us in a myriad of cultural and social expressions.” Missionary life is a two-way street, for we strive to touch people's lives as much as we allow them to touch ours.

#### **Working in Equality**

Missionaries need an attitude of working with, not just for, people in a true spirit of equality.

Missionaries are called not just to preach the Gospel, but also to listen to the Gospel themselves, as the people with whom they work share it. They go to a place as guests rather than as efficient “do-gooders.” They try to revere what is already good, true and beautiful among these people. “If we fail to link Christian values with what is already good in a culture – again, write the US Bishops – we merely export an expression of faith foreign to that culture, one the people cannot fully accept. It expresses someone else’s faith experience, not their own.”

### **Say What is Not Welcome**

Missionaries must take care not to confuse the ideal of equality and service with compromise or watering down the Christian message. As they walk alongside people, missionaries are called to be prophetic, in word and in deed. They can’t sugarcoat the Gospel, come what may!

### **Rootedness in the Lord**

Missionaries do leave their family and country, because, as St. Paul puts it, “The Love of Christ impels us!” Prayer will have a special priority in a missionary’s life, especially the Eucharist as the source of unity, the bond of Christian community, the wellspring of strength, endurance and courage. Mission is “journeying with Christ in the world.”

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**U.S. Bishops**



*Mary was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered...  
Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary" [by Antonella del Grosso, xmm]*