

Faith in Action Reflection Session: Social Action – Missionary Disciples



This FIA session has been produced by Missio, the Catholic Church's official charity for overseas mission. Find out more and view our school resources by visiting missio.org.uk

Before you begin:

Each FIA session must cover at least one key element from 'The Good News' and two from 'The Church Story'. It should also allow participants time to consider their own experience, so that each FIA session models this structure of reflection and prayer.

Each FIA session must also conclude with a prayer service.

You may wish to have the FIA Session resources available to participants at the beginning of their FIA journey for those who wish to use them as they go along.

For this session you will need:

One large candle

An image of Christ or Crucifix

A small globe (optional)

A Missio Red Box & Post-it notes

A4 copies of selected scripture, John **15: 9-17**

Photocopies of *Drawing Out Discipleship* (Appendix 1)

Photocopies of Cardinal Newman's Prayer *The Mission of My Life* (Appendix 2)

I Am Sent Postcards (Appendix 3)

Objectives

Explore the meaning of mission as a follower of Christ.

Understand that, to be a Christian is to be a missionary.

Reflect upon the many ways' individuals are sent to be missionaries of God's love in the world.

Starting point

Gather the group together, begin the session with the FIA prayer. Invite participants to share their thoughts and feelings. The following questions may help:

- How are you today? (What type of weather best describes how you are feeling?)
- How do you think your FIA Award is going so far?
- Who or what comes to mind when you hear today's session theme 'Missionary Disciple'?

Mission comes from the Latin word 'mittere', which means 'to send out'. A missionary is someone 'sent out' by God, to deliver His love in the world, to all people.

Disciple comes from the Latin verb 'discere' which means 'to learn'. The word 'discipline' derives from the same verb, indicating that discipleship requires commitment and perseverance!

- Stand up if you think you are a missionary disciple.

As FIA participants the young people have shown themselves to be missionary disciples, through their desire to:

- Learn more about Christ and follow his teachings in their life.
- Grow closer to God and allow their faith to make a difference in the world.
- Understand what it means to be part of Christ's Universal Church.

The Good News (New Jerusalem Bible)

Choose a passage from scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme. Suggestions below.

John 15: 9-17 (adapted)

[Jesus said] "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.

Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love,

just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.

A person can have no greater love than to lay down their life for their friend.

You are my friends if you follow my commandment.

I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business;

I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.

You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit,

fruit that will last."

Mark 6: 6-10

Jesus made a tour round the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Do not take a spare tunic.'

The Church Story

Share some of the Church's teachings from the Catechism, Pope's writings and examples from the lives of Holy people with the group.

You may wish to choose one or two that would be best for your group, or you may wish to present a selection to the group and ask them to comment on the one that stands out to them.

DOCAT 305 (excerpt)

'No one can be a Christian merely for his own benefit. Coming to Jesus, seeking his friendship, and following him also means publicly professing faith in him, allowing him to speak to us and commission us... All of us who have been baptised and confirmed are "messengers" and "witnesses" of the Gospel. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." (Mk 16:15).

Pope Francis on mission

'Here is a great task entrusted in a special way to young people: to be "missionary disciples", messengers of the good news of Jesus, above all to your contemporaries and friends... And don't worry if sometimes you feel that you are few and far between. The Gospel always grows from small beginnings... Be signs of hope to those who need encouragement, a helping hand to the sick, a welcome smile to the stranger, a kindly support to the lonely.' (Myanmar 2017)

'Dear young people, we didn't come into this work to "vegetate", to take it easy, to make our lives a comfortable sofa to fall asleep on... Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy, the joy that is born of God's love and wells up in your hearts with every act of mercy.' (WYD 2016)

'Today, as always, the Lord needs you, young people, for his Church. Today too, he is calling each of you to follow him in his Church and to be missionaries... Young people, please: don't put yourselves at the tail-end of history. Be active members! Build a better world, a world of brothers and sisters, a world of justice, of love, of peace, of fraternity, of solidarity.' (WYD 2013)

Lives of Holy Men and Women

St Thérèse of Lisieux (Thérèse Martin)

Thérèse Martin was born into a devout French Catholic family on January 2, 1873. She was a very sickly baby and her health remained poor throughout her life. When Thérèse was just four, her mother died. For years after this great loss, she often became anxious and sad. These feelings worsened during her time at school, as she was bullied there for being shy and studious.

Despite her many challenges, Thérèse had a strong faith and aspired to do great things as an overseas missionary. As a young girl she had been a member of the Holy Childhood Society (then the children's branch of Missio*), regularly praying for missionaries in foreign lands and sending her pocket money in support of their work.

Thérèse understood that God calls all of us to be missionaries - making Christ's love known in our own communities - but that some individuals travel overseas to do this, providing practical relief and spiritual support in areas of poverty and conflict.

When she was 14, Thérèse realised that her poor health meant that her ambition of becoming an overseas missionary would never be realised. Yet Thérèse firmly believed in the power of prayer: that our prayers, combined with God's grace, change situations for the better.

Thus, Thérèse decided that if she could not travel and work alongside missionaries, she would support them through prayer. At 15 she committed her life to this special mission and became an enclosed nun (enclosed nuns are not permitted to leave their convent, but rather dedicate their whole days to prayer).

Thérèse had dreamed as a child that she would perform heroic acts to reveal God's love to the whole world. But as she grew in years and in knowledge of Jesus, she understood that just as important if not more so, were small acts of kindness. These, she learned, really change the world. Thérèse decided that everything she did each day – especially the small, tedious and mundane tasks – she would do with great love. She called this her 'Little Way'.

Sadly, Thérèse died of tuberculosis, aged just 24. Following her death the nuns couldn't think of anything special to say about her. She had seemed quiet and ordinary. Then they remembered that she had kept a diary, and it was on reading this that they realised how extraordinary she had been. They realised that by accepting God's plan for her and by embracing her limitations and weakness, and those of the people around her, she had followed her Little Way to draw closer to God.

The nuns decided to share her ideas with others. As few people will ever perform heroic deeds for God, many could relate to Thérèse's Little Way. and soon Thérèse's Little Way became known throughout the world. Millions of people chose to follow it – most famously the missionary nun, Mother Teresa of Kolkata (Calcutta), who changed her name to Teresa in honour of little Thérèse.

Because of Thérèse's lifelong commitment to missionaries and their work, several years after her death the Pope declared her - St Thérèse of Lisieux, Patroness of Missionaries. For this reason, she is also the Patron Saint of *Missio, the Catholic Church's official charity for overseas mission.

Sean Devereux

Sean Devereux was born on the 25th November 1964. He studied at Salesian Catholic College in Hampshire where, from the age of 11 he was developing the qualities of a missionary disciple. Father Brian Jerstice, who knew Sean at school remembered that he, 'Showed qualities of ready friendship, good humour and firm leadership.'

Sean also had a strong faith. Catholicism was important to him. On his sixteenth birthday his father gave him the option to choose a holiday destination. Rather than a beach or adventure break, Sean chose to visit Mother Teresa's Orphanage in Calcutta. It was an experience that strengthened his mission to live out his faith and make a difference in the world.

At university Sean trained to become a teacher, then taught PE at a Salesian School, before answering a call he had long felt to do missionary work in Africa.

Sean became a Salesian Co-operator - a lay person who makes a commitment to support the welfare of young people. In this role he arrived in Liberia, February 1989, and began work at a Salesian Catholic School in Tappita, Liberia.

Liberia had just entered a brutal civil war and Sean briefly found himself imprisoned after pleading for the release of a student drafted into the army as a child-soldier. In 1990, escalating violence forced the school to close. But rather than return home, Sean went to work with the UN refugee agency in Liberia.

Inspired by the teachings of Christ, Sean would often speak out against injustices. On one occasion he was beaten by soldiers after confronting one of them for attempting to steal food meant for refugees. Because Sean was not afraid to make his voice heard, he was ordered to leave the country.

Sean then began working with UNICEF in war-torn Somalia, where he was assigned to organise relief for the starving in one of the most violent areas in the conflict. Once again Sean refused to stay quiet about injustices committed against ordinary Somalians. After only four months in the country, Sean was assassinated by a lone hired gunman while walking near the UNICEF compound on 2nd January (the birthday of St Thérèse of Lisieux) 1993. He was 28 years old.

At Sean's funeral, Fr Brian Jerstice referred to a favourite saying of St Don Bosco (founder of the Salesian Catholic Schools) about the need for saints in shirtsleeves – people who do not face evil and suffering with despair and disinterest, but who roll up their sleeves, and get down to work to make things better.

Sean spent his life rolling up his sleeves. As an adult he taught and supported children, principally in Liberia, and he died continuing to help those in desperate need in civil-war striven Somalia. Of his mission, Sean said: "While my heart beats, I have to do what I think I can do – and that is to help those that are less fortunate."

Every year scores of overseas missionaries are killed as they attempt to share God's love in some of the world's most dangerous countries. Many, like Sean, lived and worked caring for people living in poverty, helping children and supporting development and faith projects. Missionaries require both courage and compassion in equal measure; they also require our help. Thanks to its supporters, the charity Missio helps hundreds of missionaries and their projects across the world.

Sean's story is used with permission from the UK Salesians and Devereux family. For more information on Sean visit www.salesians.org.uk

The Personal Story

Give the young people time to reflect on their FIA journey and review the evidence and mini reflections that they have done after each action.

Discussion Prompt Questions

Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) and share their responses to the questions below. After a few minutes, invite participants to share their thoughts with the whole group.

- Place these three objectives of a missionary disciple in what you consider to be their order of importance: * Share God's love through practical help * Help people to know Jesus and follow his teachings * Build the Church

- What is the best thing – for you – about being a missionary disciple?
- What is the hardest thing – for you – about being a missionary disciple?

Exploration Ideas

Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) unless stated.

- Copy and paste the scripture **John 15: 9-17** in the centre of a Word document. Print onto A4 sheets and ask participants to annotate the lessons it reveals about how to be a missionary disciple. After a few minutes, invite groups to share their findings.
- Select one of Pope Francis' quotes about missionary disciples. Create a tag line (slogan) from this quote and set it in a poster. The poster should contain words and images that inspire young people to become missionary disciples.
- Inspired by the stories of St Thérèse of Lisieux and / or Sean Devereux, think about the qualities and values missionary disciples possess. Write or draw (as symbols) these qualities and values on the *Drawing Out Discipleship* sheet (Appendix 1), putting your initials alongside those you possess too. You may need your team mates to help you identify these. Sometimes they see our qualities and values when we can't.

Understanding Ideas

Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) unless stated.

- In groups of 4, read the Gospel passage from Mark 6 (see page 2). Imagine that you are two pairs of disciples. Dramatise a discussion between yourselves about the mission Jesus has just set. Two disciples should be enthusiastic and two doubtful about the task. The enthusiastic disciples must try and convince the other about the importance of being sent. The doubtful pair can offer their alternative view!
- View the Missio film Red Box in Cambodia <https://missio.org.uk/films/> This short film illustrates the work of Sr Eulie, an overseas missionary nun from the Philippines. Write down on post-it notes what the film teaches us about the important role missionaries play and how the charity Missio helps Sr Eulie to share God's love with others. Stick these post-it notes onto a Missio Red Box.
- Carefully read the paragraph from DOCAT (see page 3). Create a mind-map highlighting its teaching on missionary discipleship. In your mind-map, come up with as many ways as possible we can put this teaching into practise e.g. what values and actions would we show to be witnesses of the Gospel? What's the most effective way to communicate Christ's message to others?

Reflection Ideas

- Inspired by the third Pope Francis' quote (beginning 'Today, as always, the Lord needs you'). Write a poem / spoken word, that explains why the Church and the world needs missionary disciples.
- Slowly and silently read the prayer *The Mission of My Life* by John Henry Newman (Appendix 2). Recognise that the words are addressed to you and consider the ways in which you are living out what they say.
- Answer the reflection questions on the *I Am Sent* postcard (Appendix 3). If you are struggling, ask a friend to help. Sometimes they can see our qualities and potential when we can't.

Liturgy

Invite participants to sit in a circle. In the centre place a candle, an image of Christ or Crucifix, a Missio Red Box and, if possible, a small globe.

Ask a participant to light the candle, then make the sign of the cross together. Invite participants to prepare for prayer by spending a short time in silence. To avoid distractions, ask participants to close their eyes or focus on the candle flame.

After the silence, invite participants to share one lesson from today's session.

Remind the young people that today's FIA session focused on our role as missionary disciples; sent by Christ to share God's love with all people, everywhere.

Recall that this task is expressed clearly in the following reading from John's Gospel.

Invite a participant to read **John 15: 9-17** (Or have each line read by different participants).

Note that these words inspired the first followers of Jesus – and millions more since then – to travel the world as missionary disciples. Because of these missionaries, Christ's body on earth – the Church – is now made of people from every continent.

Take the globe and ask the group to imagine that this contains the world's 1.2 billion Catholics. Ask them to slowly pass the globe around the group and while they do so, to consider the following.

As members of Christ's body, the lives of each one of us is closely connected to millions of Catholics around the world. To each one of us Christ set the same mission - to share God's love with all people.

Supporting the charity Missio provides one way in which we can all work together to achieve this.

But the unique part you play in Christ's great mission matters too!

Listen carefully to the words of our closing prayer and reflect on what your unique service might be.

Invite participants to still themselves again by returning to a few seconds of silence, closing their eyes, or focusing on the candle.

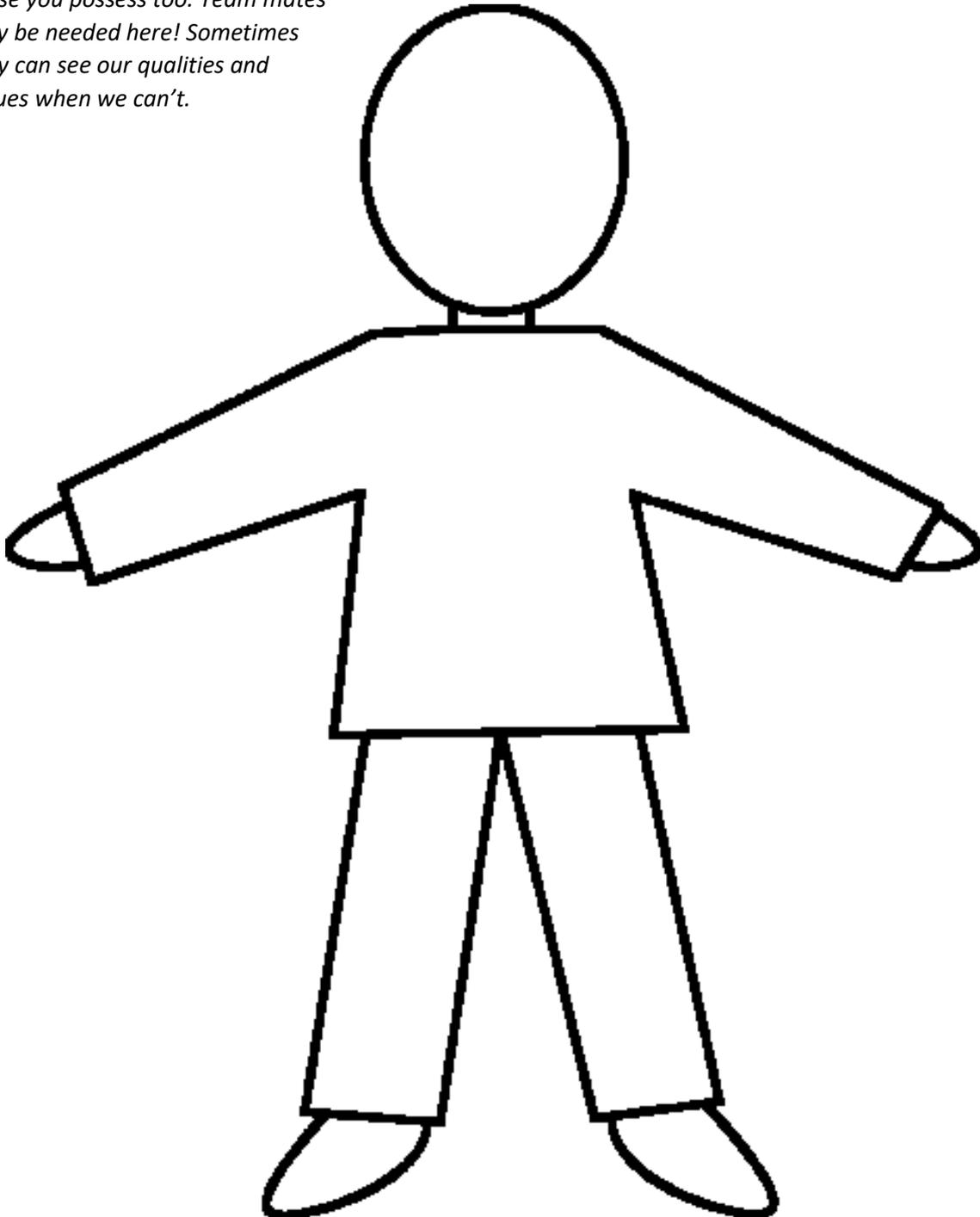
Follow the silence by reading together the (adapted) prayer of Blessed Cardinal Newman: *The Mission of My Life* (Appendix 2)

Make the sign of the cross together.

Drawing Out Discipleship (Appendix 1)



As a group, discuss the qualities and values missionary disciples possess. Write or draw (as symbols) these here. Add your initials alongside those you possess too. Team mates may be needed here! Sometimes they can see our qualities and values when we can't.



The Mission of My Life by John Henry Newman – Adapted (Appendix 2).

Slowly and silently read the following prayer. Recognise that the words are addressed to you and consider the ways you are living out what they say.



God has created and calls me to do Him some definite service.

He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.

I have my mission. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

He has not created me for nothing.

I shall do good; I shall do His work.

I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandment to love.

Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.

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I Am Sent (Appendix 3)

We suggest that leaders photocopy these templates on thin white card before cutting out. The postcards could also be incorporated in the closing liturgy.

Dear All,

As a missionary Disciple, Christ sends me out to share God's love and make a difference in the world.
These are my values and qualities:

This is how I plan to use my qualities and values to achieve the mission I've been set...

My Human Family

Planet Earth

The Universe



Dear All,

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These are my values and qualities:

This is how I plan to use my qualities and values to achieve the mission I've been set...

My Human Family

Planet Earth

The Universe

