

EMM Reflection: Inspired by Mission



This reflection has been created to help schools celebrate the Extraordinary Month of Mission (Oct'19). It focuses on one of four EMM aims: To be inspired by the actions of saints and living missionaries.

Today we're going to think about people who inspire us. Is anyone brave enough to begin telling us about a person who inspires them? They can be well known individuals or people you know personally?

If names are few, suggest some that students may know e.g. Jamal Edwards MBE, Malala Yousifazi, Professor Green, Greta Thunberg. If possible, also add someone from within the school community.

- What makes that person inspirational?

There have been lots of studies conducted to find out what it is that teenagers find inspiring in others. I'm going to read out a list of these qualities now. Raise your hand if you find them inspiring too?

Inspiring individuals are: courageous, hardworking, have integrity, are dedicated, accepting of others, respectful, loyal, compassionate, imperfect, resilient, passionate, selfless, encourage others.

When we think about this list of qualities it's important to recognise that what motivates some of the most inspiring people we know is not money, beauty, and status – even though the media would like us to believe these **are the only** life goals. Our greatest inspirational heroes are motivated by a much greater mission - to make the world better and show love to others.

In addition to those we've already named, there are hundreds of inspirational individuals we've overlooked. Individuals whose lives have been entirely motivated by this greater mission. They are saints and missionaries who over the years have helped countless people by sharing God's love with the world.

There are many reasons why we overlook these saints and missionaries. It could be because we don't really know any, so we can't identify with them. Or it is because when we think of them, we bring to mind images of people who seem overly pious, dutiful, dull and unadventurous - hardly inspiring! Yet the individuals honoured by the Church as saints, are honoured in part because they possessed those qualities just mentioned.

Saints like Marianne Cope who aged 14 left school to support her family by working in a factory. Marianne worked selflessly in these years while dreaming of becoming a Religious Sister. She finally did so aged 24. As Sister Marianne she continued her education and went on to become a teacher in a school for immigrant children. Hardworking, caring, and confident, she then helped establish and run two Catholic hospitals, insisting that patients of every race and religion be treated. Then one day, she received a letter from the Hawaiian government begging for help in treating the island's lepers. Others had been asked to help but refused the request, afraid they would catch the disease. Marianne agreed and made the long journey from her home in America to Hawaii. There she spent 30 years caring for the lepers. Over the years she helped build hospitals and established homes and schools for the families of those affected by the disease. Marianne died in Hawaii in 1918 and was made a saint in 2012.

- What inspiring qualities could you recognise in Marianne?
- In silence, consider which of those qualities you also possess and how God might be calling you to use them to make a difference?

Missionaries also need the inspirational qualities we've mentioned, for as their name indicates they devote their lives to the mission that Jesus set all his followers - to take his love to everyone, everywhere, most especially those who struggle and suffer.

Because of this, missionaries serve in areas many choose to avoid, places of poverty and conflict. Like 1990s Liberia, where at that time a brutal war was pulling the country apart and where a young teacher from England, motivated by his faith was determined to make a difference. Sean Devereux was only 24 when he travelled to Liberia to work with the Salesian missionaries. Inspired by the example of Christ, Sean would often speak up for those who had no voice. On one occasion he was imprisoned after pleading for the release of a child-soldier. On another he was beaten by soldiers after confronting one of them for attempting to steal food meant for refugees. Sean also worked in Somalia, during that country's civil war. There he was assigned to organise relief for the starving and again Sean refused to stay quiet about the injustices and theft he saw. Due to this, after only four months in Somalia, Sean was assassinated by a hired gunman. He was 28 years old.

- What inspiring qualities could you recognise in Sean?
- In silence, consider which of those qualities you also possess and how God might be calling you to use them to make a difference?

Pope Francis wants us to remember with pride, saints and missionaries like Marianne and Sean, so that we might be inspired by their actions and motivated by the mission they shared. A mission summed up in this short reading from the Gospel of Luke.

*'The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.'* Luke 4: 18-19

There are many ways in which we are each called by God to fulfil this mission. We may not serve in war zones or run hospitals in far flung places. But we do have to find our own way to go out and share God's love. Pope Francis offers some wise words about this. He says:

'Imitating the Saints does not mean copying their lifestyle and their way of living holiness... You have to discover who you are and develop your own way of being holy, whatever others may say or think... becoming more fully yourself, becoming what the Lord wished to dream and create.'

Christus Vivit, 162

Today we began by thinking about people who inspire us, and we conclude with Pope Francis encouraging you to inspire others. You can make a difference by being who God created you to be and by fulfilling your mission - to share Christ's love in the world. Let's reflect upon this now as we say our closing prayer.

Conclude this reflection with the EMM prayer, found at missio.org.uk/emm-schools-page/

Our #MyMission and #OurMission digital campaign provides a great call to action. Visit our EMM Webpage to find out more missio.org.uk/emm-schools-page/.