

EMM Reflection: Understanding 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 increase understanding of mission.

Instruction: *Before this reflection we suggest you write a greeting card for a member of your group (student or staff) that has a celebration (birthday, passed a test, etc) that week.*

Before we begin our reflection today, I have a special message for someone here.

Instruction: *You could hand over the card yourself or ask a volunteer to pass it onto the student/staff member. Once given, invite the recipient to read the greeting. This should produce a positive group response. Encourage students to share in the good wishes before continuing.*

It's lovely to send a card. At times of celebration it enables us to share in someone's joy and - more importantly - to let them know that they are in our thoughts.

Hands up if you like to send cards or use other ways to send greetings e.g. social media, post-it notes.

The method by which we communicate our greeting is not that important. In fact, we may not always use words. We may bake a cake or send flowers. However we communicate, what is important is that we send out a message that lets someone know that they are thought about, valued, and loved.

Often the most special messages are sent during difficult times, during illness or after a loss. The messages we send then, can help someone remember that they're not alone and that they're supported.

We see examples of this on social media. In a short space of time, hundreds of supportive messages can be sent. These might even evolve into digital campaigns, when tens of thousands unite to bring about positive change. All the messages of love and support we send with a sincere heart - in whatever form - help to build what Pope Francis calls 'a civilisation [or a culture] of love.'

Pope Francis believes that the need to create this civilisation of love is so great that, in an effort to encourage the whole world to work together and build it, he's designated October 2019 an *Extraordinary Month of Mission*.

The title of this special month suggests that *mission* is the way in which we can build this culture of love. So it would help if someone could explain what *mission* means?

Possible responses: an important task, a goal, a difficult aim.

One way to understand *mission* is by going back to the original meaning.

Mission comes from an ancient Latin word, *Mittere*, meaning to send.

We've heard a lot so far about the messages of love we send to others. However, the mission Pope Francis refers to is something much greater. A short Bible passage we'll hear now helps us understand why.

‘[Jesus said to his followers] You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you [gave you a mission] to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last.’ John 15:16

This reading and the Extraordinary Month of Mission reminds us that Jesus **sends us** into the world. They remind us that although it’s good to send a card, or post supportive messages on social media, this isn’t enough. **We are to go out** and spend time with that friend or relative. **Jesus is sending you!**

- In the reading we’ve just heard Jesus says, ‘Go and bear fruit.’ What do you think he meant by this?

Possible responses: Do good deeds. Produce good results. Be successful.

- Let’s think more about why he used the word ‘fruit’. What do all fruits have either inside or outside?

Answer: Seeds.

Jesus was reminding us that when we go out and give witness to God’s love in the world, we bring something good and appealing. What is more, we plant seeds. Some may follow our example, then bear their own fruit. This way, with God’s grace, love spreads and goodness grows.

Every year hundreds of students in schools like yours are spreading love and growing goodness. Students like Anthony from Durham, who to support those less fortunate in his community set up a food collection in his school. He then asked the people in his village for help too. Anthony’s witness has inspired students, staff, and his neighbours to get involved and support their local food bank. Or Selina from East London, who with the help of her friends and teachers created an Eco Warriors club in her school. Inspired by her belief that ‘God has given us this planet and we should protect God’s gift for others’, Selina and her friends are now reviewing each area of the school to improve its impact on the environment.*

No mission is easy. It takes commitment, effort, and courage to go out and give witness to God’s love.

- What might help us? How might we be encouraged?

Possible responses: Faith. Prayer. Friends and family.

Pope Francis offers a suggestion. He says:

‘Dear young people, Jesus invites us to build together the civilization of love, as His disciples and missionaries, here and now: at home, with your friends, in the situations you live every day... [Therefore, it is necessary] to encounter Him in prayer, in the Word, in the sacraments. Dedicate time, make silence to hear His voice.’

Pope Francis is reminding us that the mission to go out and build a culture of love, no matter how challenging it may be at times, is not impossible if it is shared with others and founded on Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ example, shown in the Gospels, guides us. His friendship, gained through prayer, encourages us. His closeness, found in silence and the sacraments, strengthens us.

Let’s use this Extraordinary Month of Mission, to think about how Jesus is sending you into the world to share God’s love with others. The words of our closing prayer might help us to reflect on this now.

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/.

* Anthony and Selina are both recipients of Million Minutes (Registered Charity 1140079), Celebrating Young People Awards. For more information and details of how to nominate your students for future awards, please visit the Million Minutes website - millionminutes.org