

# YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES

ACTS. 1:8

## Monthly Reflection:

October 2022

Pope Francis has chosen this verse as the theme of World Mission Day 2022. This parting message that the Risen Jesus gave is full of deep emotion and closeness to his beloved disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth”.

The significant part – “You shall be my witnesses”, recalls the bond between every missionary and Christ Himself. We are His representatives in this world! Being part of a missionary movement at the service of the Church, this personal mandate to be a herald of Jesus in the world ought to be the very DNA of our life. However, our Pope reminds us that this ‘mission is carried out together, not individually, in communion with the ecclesial community, and not on one’s own initiative. Even in cases where an individual in some very particular situation carries out the evangelizing mission alone, he must always do so in communion with the Church which commissioned him’.

A disciple is sent by Jesus to the world “not only to carry out the mission but above all to live the mission entrusted to them”. This calls for the coherence of life. In evangelisation, therefore, the example of the Christian life and the proclamation of Christ are inseparable. We can only bear witness to the risen Lord as much as we have experienced Him personally. Our proclamation should be a natural outpouring of our intimacy with Christ.

We are called to be His ‘witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth’. A witness is someone who is an ‘eye-witness/testifies in court/a messenger or even a martyr (witnessing to the point of death). But what is the significance of the places mentioned, for we live far away from them! It can be interpreted as the four dimensions of our missionary call. The first dimension of witnessing to Jesus should be in our own homes, among our extended family, neighbourhood and friends. We cannot be genuine witnesses of Jesus if we fail to share Jesus with our family and close associates. Our mission must begin with Jerusalem.

The next phase of the mission is the proclamation and witnessing beyond the circle of our family and friends. In our context, this can mean within our Jesus Youth circles, especially beyond our JY friends and where we work or study. This is witnessed in all Judea.

Samaria is a call to move out of our ‘comfort zones’. This phase requires more courage and passion. We must set aside our fears, inhibitions, and limits. The eagerness to share the joy that we feel in our hearts and the presence of the Spirit that dwells in us makes this possible.

The fourth and last dimension in witnessing to the Lord is a complete surrender to the Lord and to his mission and complete willingness to proclaim the Kingdom of God. In this phase, nothing will separate us from the love of Christ (ref. Rom. 8:35). As we progress to this phase, we will become a true herald of Jesus and whatever we do or say will emanate the fragrance of Jesus and we become witnesses of Jesus to the ‘ends of the earth’. While only a few are called physically to travel to the ends of the earth, modern technology provides us with limitless opportunities.

This missionary month invites every Jesus Youth to dream and work for a true missionary movement. May everything, we are and do carry the missionary zeal of a soul that is ignited by the presence of the Spirit. Let us be close to the Master to bring the “smell” of Christ into our homes, our universities, and our places of work. How blessed we and others are through us when we live the voice of Christ that resonates within us - “You Shall be My Witnesses...”

-Fr Shyjan Job SDB,  
a 7th batch full-timer, serves as Rector of Don Bosco Mission at Wau, in South Sudan, Africa. He is the Chaplain of the Jesus Youth International Mission Team.