**Missionary Disciple of Christ**

When I think about what it means to be a missionary disciple of Christ, I am reminded of a beautiful picture I saw in a church many years ago. The picture displayed a majestic barren tree set before a glorious sunrise, all of which were perfectly mirrored in a clear lake. Placed at the center of the picture was a quote - *Be a Vibrant Reflection of God’s Love*. I immediately noticed that the quote said to be a VIBRANT reflection of God’s love, not simply a reflection. A vibrant reflection can be translated to a ‘lively, vivacious, exciting, energetic’ reflection of His love. I thought wow – that’s the kind of love I want to reflect; however, I really I didn’t know how to bring about that kind of love. Mathew 7:7 tells us *“if we ask, it will be given to us; seek, we will find; knock, the door will be opened to us.”* So, in prayer I asked God to guide me and, in meditation, God gently revealed that I cannot reflect His love if I do not know His love. In His goodness God showed me that in order to understand His unconditional love, I needed to deepen my relationship with Him and learn to trust in His divine providence. Only then would I be able to vibrantly reflect His love. That’s when I began to seek a more intimate relationship with God and to draw closer to our Lord Jesus. I learned that as I pursued Him with an open heart, I experienced an overwhelming sense of His presence and unconditional love. These experiences have encouraged me to be a missionary disciple of Christ by being that vibrant reflection of His love. One of the ways God has called me to His discipleship is through the Communion Outreach Ministry at St. Michaels. In this ministry, I am privileged to share Jesus in the Eucharist with the residents of Pleasant View Nursing Home. Blessed St. Theresa of Calcutta once said “*the world today is hungry not only for bread, but hungry for love; hungry to be wanted, to be loved.”* Many of the residents suffer from this type of hunger and God has used me on my visits to satisfy their hunger and show them that they are indeed wanted, loved and cared for by Him. My monthly visits with the residents continue to be a very humbling and enriching experience. Another way I’ve been called to be a missionary disciple of Christ is through St. Michael’s Work Camp Ministry. God provided the courage I needed to step out of my comfort zone and serve the less fortunate in Alleghany County through this ministry. Working with other adult volunteers and youth in various churches as God’s hands and feet, showing His mercy and love, has been another very inspiring experience - so much so that I will be participating again this year and plan to join the Jamaica mission team in 2019!

Hebrews 12:1-2 provides some additional insight for me on missionary discipleship – “*therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith”.*  As a Christian, I am called to witness to my belief in Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and share my encounters of His merciful love. To be a missionary disciple of Christ, I’ve learned that it’s only necessary to honestly share the stories of His grace in my life and in the lives of those I love. When I think of the women God has placed in my life, 2 Corinthians 1:4 comes to mind – “*He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”* God has called me to share my experience, strength and hope with women who are traveling down the difficult paths that I once traveled. I am able to be His disciple by simply sharing from my heart the many ways God cared for me in those difficult times. As a Catholic, I also want to witness to the teachings of the Church. Witnessing to my Catholic faith as a missionary disciple of Christ can be as simple as making the sign of the cross in a restaurant before a meal, inviting someone to mass or posting a quote from scripture or a beloved saint on social media. In more recent years, the Spirit has placed individuals in my life who question our Catholic traditions. These encounters have encouraged me to explore my faith more intentionally. I am learning to share the history behind my faith through reading the Catechism and the writings of the Saints. A dear Christian friend of mine (and one of the individuals who has a lot of questions about Catholicism) recently shared that her opinion of Catholics has drastically changed because of the way I practice my faith in every area of my life. She recognizes that my dedication to our church traditions is the source of my strength and that those traditions draw me closer to Jesus, the perfecter of faith.

My spiritual journey has truly been of a **F**antastic **A**dventure **I**n **T**rusting **H**im (FAITH) and I wait with great anticipation for God to reveal His plan for my next adventure as His missionary disciple.

**Lynn Marion**