

## Two Hands of God

In these columns, I have often spoken about all of us, as Christians, being called to be missionary disciples. It is a strange combination of words to describe each of us. Most Christians, I think, would not consider themselves as missionaries, although I hope that all readers of *The Far East* magazine do think of themselves as sharing in the mission of God. If you do not, I am not doing my job!

What about the word 'disciple'. In the Gospels, Jesus has disciples. In his time most rabbis had disciples. They followed the rabbi around the country, sharing his life. They heard him preach and learnt how he lived. This was true also for Jesus' disciples. When we say we are disciples of Jesus, we are expressing our desire to follow him, to imitate him and to live like he did. It is more than just learning his philosophy or studying his commandments. It is a whole way of life.

A major problem for a lot of us Catholics is that we learnt quite a bit about Jesus when we were in school, but after that not much more. Most of us ended up with a religion that was about being good or bad. We were good because we went to Mass on Sunday and did all the right things, or we had sins that we had not confessed and therefore we were bad.

If we had three years of moving around with Jesus, we would have learnt a lot more than just the rules. We would have learnt that his message is about God's love for us. It is a message about mercy and compassion. There is more to being a disciple than what an adolescent can absorb about the rules.

How to follow Jesus today? We may have the desire to follow Jesus and we may read the Gospels. This is a good first step. One sound lesson we can learn from the Gospels is that if we fall or if we are not perfect, it does not seem to matter too much. Look at Peter and the rest of the disciples. They failed Jesus, but he still forgave them. Jesus is still forgiving each one of us today.

Another part of being a disciple of Jesus is to follow the promptings that the Holy Spirit gives us. A famous French Jesuit priest said there are two hands of God. One works on the inside of us and the other on the outside. When someone is using clay to make a jar, they need to use both hands. One to shape the outside and the other the inside.

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Fr Teilhard de Chardin SJ said that God works the same way with us. God works on the outside through what we often call providence. I might be thinking that I need to meet someone and then I walk into the room and there they are. Sometimes people call it chance or serendipity, but whatever it is called, Christians can see in these occasions the hand of God.

As for the inside, have you noticed how some idea that you may have read keeps appearing time after time. You may see something on TV, and feel unusually moved by it. God works through our thoughts, our feelings, our imagination and our intuition. This is the second hand of God. As *Ephesians 2:10* says, "We are God's work of art".

The beauty of this understanding of being a disciple is that we come to realise that at every moment of our lives we are being transformed, shaped and led by God. We are truly followers of Christ. We are truly missionary disciples.

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