

MISSIONARY DISCIPLE,  
TO SPREAD HAPPINESS, I HAVE HANDS THAT BUILD THE KINGDOM



As in the previous two pastoral years, our theme for the year 2022-2023 maintains the perspective of a Church on the move, of our responsibility as missionary disciples and of the Beatitudes. However, it emphasizes the hands that build the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice and peace. That is why the two Beatitudes referred to are those of the "hungry and thirsty for justice" (Mt 5:6) and the "peacemakers" (Mt 5:9).

As Pope Francis said in the general audience of January 21, 2020, the Beatitudes are the identity card of the person who wants to be a disciple of Christ. The person of Christian faith must be hungry and thirsty for justice. Today, to talk of justice is to speak, first of all, of social justice with its fundamental elements of respect for human rights, equal pay and the equitable sharing of the earth's goods. This sense of justice is primordial and is implied in the biblical idea that to desire justice is first of all to seek God. It means doing whatever God requires and behaving in accordance with God's will, which covers our relationship with God and also our relationship with others. Indeed, to do God's will is to make Him first in my life, but it is also to make Him alive and visible through concrete gestures and tangible actions of sharing, forgiveness, fighting for justice and denouncing the injustices that hurt humanity. As Pope Francis so aptly writes, "such justice becomes a reality in one's life when one is just in one's own decisions, and then it becomes manifest when one seeks justice for the poor and the weak" (Be Joyful and Rejoice, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 79). Our society is in urgent need of equity, truth and social justice. As followers of Christ, we must be its proclaimers and promoters.

My identity as a Christian also leads me to be a peacemaker. This means first of all to make peace within oneself, to live with the inner freedom of a person who is wounded but loved by God and saved in Jesus Christ. A gift of God and a fruit of the Spirit, this inner peace allows us to bring about peace in our relations with others and with nature. This gift is made up of tolerance, harmony, understanding, reconciliation, gentleness and protection of the environment. Since there is no peace without justice, being a peacemaker means committing oneself to repairing injustices done to the poor and oppressed, restoring peace to people who are victims of social disorder, being "menders" in conflict situations. This beatitude on peace speaks of action, of personal and collective involvement. Indeed, the person who is a peacemaker makes, acts, or works with his or her hands. With his or her hands and heart, he or she builds relationships of friendship, solidarity and mutual respect. They put their hands to work and get involved in initiatives that build this Kingdom of justice and peace announced by Jesus. It works to promote peace and non-violence by encouraging us all to be listeners, to encounter one another and to dialogue with each other, as the Synod on Synodality reminds us.

After experiencing a global health crisis that is not over and that has revealed once again our vulnerability and shaken those too often erroneous and superficial certainties with which we build our plans of action, our predictions, our projects and our priorities, we are now experiencing the ravages of horrific wars in Ukraine, Yemen and other countries of the world. These are destabilizing the world stage and causing global inflation that is particularly disastrous for poor countries and for the poor of our country. "We keenly feel the need to recapture into our hands, life with its hopes, dreams and efforts," as Pope Francis says. This is not a time for complaint or lament, but for an infusion of generosity and action. The Kingdom of God calls us to commitment and counts on our hands, hands that are open and ready to get them dirty in order to build living communities and united families, to build a society and a common home where "justice and peace embrace" (Ps 84:11). The Beatitudes, the Charter of the Kingdom, are meant to help us get back on our feet and on the road, when hope falters or seems foreign to us. Living in the exigent spirit of the Beatitudes, the missionary disciple charts paths of hope. So, this year, to create happiness, I have hands that build the kingdom.