

## Reflection 6: Ministry of a Bishop: Apostle

### Scripture

*16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*[d]

### Catechism

Q. What is the ministry of a bishop?

A. The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry. (Book of Common Prayer, 855)

### Apostle

A term based on the Greek word which means "someone sent out." It is used seventy-nine times in the NT. It often refers to the disciples. The primary NT meaning seems to refer to someone who is a personal messenger of Jesus. This is emphasized in Acts when Matthias is chosen to replace Judas, the betrayer, after he committed suicide.

Although Paul was not a follower or disciple of Jesus before his death and resurrection, he does refer to himself as an apostle because he had seen the risen Lord and he was sent out to preach to the Gentiles. In Heb 3:1 Jesus is called an apostle because he is one who was sent by God. (<https://episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/apostle>)

Apostles are those sent out as messengers of God. What an enormous task! And, this is only one of several responsibilities of a bishop identified by our own catechism.

Consider, however, in most cases, that apostles are carefully prepared for this work. Preaching and teaching Scripture, especially the good news of the gospel; training and equipping the faithful; inspiring and blessing the gifts and ministries of others; spiritual leadership and mentoring; living a life of good character, facing hardships with grace and bounty with humility; and spending time with God in prayer, holy listening, and worship are all ways that apostles develop in the life of the church.

### Discussion

1. The "Great Commission" has few words, but is a huge directive. How did the disciples accomplish this?
2. How do you see the "Great Commission" working in the church-at-large today? In our diocese? In your parish? In your life?
3. Think about apostles, both past and present. What sets them apart as "apostle"? How have those apostles impacted your spiritual journey?
4. How does the church continue to develop apostles?
5. The Catechism identifies many areas of responsibilities for a bishop. Are these equal in your opinion? If you feel they are equal, share why you believe this. If you feel they are not equal, how would you rank them and why?
6. What Scripture might you pray to deepen your understanding of "apostle"?