



Witness

The concept of witness is central to understanding Christian discipleship. After his resurrection, Jesus instructed his disciples: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). For the first disciples this witness was based on their personal experience of hearing Jesus teach, perform miracles, and (for a number of apostles) their presence at his crucifixion and post-resurrection appearances.

After the deaths of these “first generation” disciples, members of the early Church became witnesses of the saving love of Jesus through faith rather than personal contact. Throughout the history of the Church, this witness often resulted in persecution and death as they courageously stood up for their faith – one needs to go no further than to the like Sts Joan of Arc or Oscar Romero to see evidence of this.

For present day Christianity, the call to be a witness of faith is still an integral element of the life of a believer. This call can often be challenged or rejected in a secular culture but the need is as real as it was on a mountaintop in the presence of Jesus and the first disciples. The job description for being a witness could well be found in Jesus’ commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind ... (and) you shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22: 37, 39).