

## **Luke 9:1-6**

Jesus summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic.

Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there.

And as for those who do not welcome you,

when you leave that town,

shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them."

Then they set out and went from village to village

proclaiming the Good News and curing diseases everywhere.

### ***On A Mission From God***

Sometimes we get caught up in the day-to-day activities of life and we forget who we are and what we are about. We become myopic. It's hard to see because of the busyness of everyday life. Life becomes blurry before us. In today's Gospel, Jesus sends the Apostles out on a mission. It's no stretch to say that we, like the Apostles are called on that same mission. The classic Chicago-based film with Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi, [The Blues Brother's] you may remember. Like them, we are on a mission from God.

That's the call of today's Gospel. We're not just living our lives, we're not just trying to get to Heaven, we are called by Christ to be missionaries. If we have that perspective in mind it gives us a sense of identity and a sense of power. That's how Jesus begins the Gospel today isn't it?

He blesses his disciples with the sense of power so they can see clearly who they are and what they are about. There's nothing funny about the struggles that our Church is going through today. In many ways, it's a demonic attack, it's a perfect storm against the Church. It undermines the Church's mission. We lose our sense of who we are and what we are about.

One of the things that Pope Francis has emphasized again and again, is that the Church exists for mission. We gather together today not just simply for the sanctification of our own private souls, we gather together to be strengthened so that as we go forth from our Mass today we have a clear sense of being called by God on His mission.

What is that mission? Jesus gives the Apostles power, and he gives us power to cast out demons; everything that demeans us, everything that says life is not worth living. Jesus empowers us and sends us forth to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Cosmas and Damian, two doctors who used the skill that they had to make a difference in this world, using their skills as Physicians. Every one of us is gifted

by God, whether we are a butcher or a baker or candlestick maker, every one of us has gifts and talents that Christ has given us. He asks us to use those talents to make a difference in this world.

I love this little story that says it well. There was a stranger who came to a corporation and he went to the CEO and said, "What do you do here?" The CEO looked at him like he had two heads and four eyes and said, "What do you think I do? My job is to make money for the stockholders." He went to the secretary for the CEO and said, "What do you do around here?" She said, "Whatever he tells me to do, that's my job." He went to the accountant and said, "What's your job?" The accountant said, "I crunch numbers, I make sure that the books are balanced." And the stranger went to the janitor and said, "What do you do around here?" And he said, "I help build rocket ships to take people into outer space."

What do we do with that one precious life that God has given us? Do we simply look at the day-to-day tasks, or are we able to see the larger picture of Jesus inviting us to proclaim the Kingdom of God? Do we understand that we are people on a mission and we are called to proclaim that Christ is present in our midst; that Jesus is the Christ; that Jesus is Emmanuel—God With Us—in the here and now.

Increasingly, people are looking at our culture as a post-Christian culture. We've moved beyond Christianity they say, and what a sad state that is. I had dinner with some friends last night, who were saying that as they go from church to church, they wondered why so many of our churches are empty? In America we are doing a little better than Europe where the churches in many cases are little more than Museum pieces. But our churches today are in danger of becoming like they are in Europe. If we are going to reverse the tide, if we are going to dig ourselves out of the hole that our clergy and our Bishops have dug us into, it's going to be because we pulled together as Catholic Christians and we recognize that the task of evangelization belongs to all of us; that we are building the Kingdom of God, that Christ is working in and through us, and that we, like those disciples, are commissioned to heal the sin-sick souls of those around us, within our families, our friends, and those that work with us day in day out.

Bishop Barron, in commenting on this passage, said that we need two gifts of the Holy Spirit. You remember the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit? Wisdom. Understanding. Counsel. Knowledge. Fortitude. Fear of the Lord. Holy Piety. He said especially those last two gifts, Fear of the Lord, and Piety are what we need to recover today. Fear of the Lord doesn't mean that we are afraid of God, Fear of the Lord means that we are afraid of losing God in our lives. God is at the center of our lives and all of our actions, our thoughts, our desires, are oriented toward deepening our relationship with God. Piety is that sense that the actions of our lives are oriented toward holy worship of our God.

I've told this story from time to time about the cartoon that appeared in the New Yorker many years ago of two guys standing in front of a giant \$100 bill bowing back and forth and then one guy turns to the other and says, I love worshiping at this church because it's the only place where I don't feel that I'm a hypocrite.

A sense of piety: to place the Lord, Our God, at the center of our lives and give God the worship that is due. Fear of the Lord, placing the Lord at the center. Piety, worshiping the Lord and

loving the Lord, Our God, with all our heart, our mind, our strength. This gives us a sense of who we are and what we are about. Let's take off anything that obscures that vision and put on the vision that Christ calls us to today. To know who we are, not just as individuals but as the people of God.

Amen? Amen.