

**HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCE ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
 APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 "COLLEGIAL SHARING AMONG BROTHER BISHOPS"
 WEDNESDAY OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME
 SACRED HEART SEMINARY & SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
 HALES CORNERS, WISCONSIN
 SEPTEMBER 25, 2019**

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the Holy Father's representative to the United States, I greet you in his name, assuring you of his spiritual closeness and prayers. It is certainly good to be back at Sacred Heart Seminary, gathered with so many brother bishops, in this place of prayer and formation of future ministers of the Gospel.

Today's Gospel is the beginning of the ninth chapter of Luke. In a sense, the entire ninth chapter encapsulates the ordained ministry. The Twelve are summoned by Jesus to cast out demons and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. The chapter continues with the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Both remind us that the priest and bishop are ministers of Word and Sacrament. The chapter includes Peter's confession of faith, as well as the prediction of the Passion. This reminds us of our need for communion with the Successor of Saint Peter, the need to witness to Jesus, and the consequences of fidelity to our mission – suffering. The priest is configured to Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who is, at the same time, also the Victim offered.

The prediction of the Passion is followed by the Transfiguration: the glory of the Lord is shown to strengthen the disciples' faith, promising the glory of the resurrection after the ignominy of the Cross. Finally, at the end of the chapter, Jesus places a child in the midst of disciples, reminding them that the one who is least among them will be the greatest. In fact, the chapter which began with Jesus giving his power and authority to the Twelve – not to rule over others or dominate them – concludes with a reminder to use the authority given by Him to serve them and the Kingdom by preaching and healing. We find all of this in just one chapter!

Today we have just the first six verses of the chapter. Jesus equips the Twelve to share in His ministry, giving them power and authority. The Apostles are men who are "sent" by God on a mission. They are sent: their mission is not their own but the Lord's. From Him flow power and authority. Jesus gave them power and authority to cast out demons and to cure diseases, both of which need to be understood in the context of the coming of the Kingdom. He sent them not only to bring healing but also to proclaim (*kēryssō*) the Kingdom; at the conclusion of the Gospel, the Twelve go *from village to village proclaiming (evangelizō) the Good News*. Evangelization and proclamation of the kerygma go hand in hand.

Jesus gives them very specific directions for the mission. They are to take nothing with them for the journey, forgoing walking sticks, food, money, a second tunic, and even a sack. Jesus wants them to carry out their mission in a radically simple way. Those who live in poorer or rural dioceses know what it is like to carry out a mission without many resources; nevertheless, the proclamation must go forth. Jesus teaches His disciples that rather than put their trust in material resources, above all, they must place their

trust in Him. They must learn to rely more on God than on themselves. I wonder whether in the mission of evangelization we are more concerned about money, strategic plans, and numbers of parishioners and students than we are about the Good News we must share!

The disciples of Jesus must trust in Him, even under difficult circumstances. Some will welcome them as they travel about. We too have experienced the hospitality and generosity of so many Catholics as we carry out our ministry. Jesus instructs the Apostles to stay at whatever house will welcome them. He does not say, "Stay at the biggest, best, and most comfortable house offered to you by your wealthiest benefactors." Again, simplicity must mark the mission.

Jesus also reminds His disciples that the mission will not be easy. He tells them that some will not welcome them. There will always be opposition to the Gospel. We too know rejection and lack of success. Many wish to exclude the Church from the public sphere. The hostility to Catholics and the suspicion of bishops and priests, in particular, is growing. But even in the face of this opposition and lack of success, the mission must go on. Jesus instructs the disciples to shake the dust from their feet against those towns that do not receive them; this is a symbolic gesture. It wishes to serve as a prophetic sign calling others to repentance.

Finally, after receiving authority, power, and instructions from the Lord Jesus, the Apostles finally set out. We can't just sit around thinking about the mission. We actually have to go out and do it. For this reason, the Holy Father continually says that he wants a Church that goes forth (cf. *EG*, 20) and that he dreams of a missionary church (cf. *EG*, 27). The Holy Father reminds us that we need to be in a *permanent state of mission*, which really means:

"To go forth to meet without keeping a safe distance; to take rest without being idle; to touch others without fear. It is a matter of working day by day in the *fields*, where God's people, entrusted to your care, live their lives. We cannot let ourselves be paralyzed by our air-conditioned offices, statistics and our strategies." (POPE FRANCIS, ADDRESS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF CELAM, 7 SEPTEMBER 2017)

What are they (and we) sent forth to do? To proclaim the Good News and to cure diseases everywhere. But why? What does the Gospel offer? Pope Francis tells us:

The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew. (POPE FRANCIS, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 24 NOVEMBER 2013, 1).

The Gospel offers the joy of salvation! This is our mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God – a Kingdom of justice, love, and peace. This is our mission to proclaim Him – the Eternal Word of God – our joy and our salvation. May Mary, the Cause of Our Joy, accompany us on our mission.