

- There is an old Cambodian proverb: If you want to travel fast, travel alone. If you want to travel far, travel with others.
  - Each of our readings talk about journey, about making a way from one place to another.
  - In our first reading we have Naaman, commander of the Aram king's, a strong and well respected leader who had leprosy and was looking for any avenue to move towards healing.
  - In our gospel it's a similar journey of healing. Jesus, entering an unnamed town, is approached by 10 lepers who stand at a distance and cry out to him. All are healed. At their request for mercy, Jesus heals them.
  
- But for Namaan and one of those ten lepers, the journey is not over. It is not merely a journey from sickness to health, from the Aram to the Jordan, from the forest to the priest. Rather, theirs is a journey far greater.
  - For each, everything stops and immediately each seeks to offer thanks, thanks which goes far beyond mere words.
  - For Naaman, who's rich and powerful, takes the means for a permanent sacrifice. Whenever he offers sacrifice, he will be reminded of God's power. He will always be thankful because his life will never be the same.
  - The Samaritan leper, without either money or power, also makes a sacrifice, giving up the one thing he has – better to say **might** have. Remember, he is on his way to see the priest who would declared him healed. Until he presents himself to the priest he cannot be declared clean or go home to family but he still stops and goes back to Jesus, taking the chance that the healing will somehow be undone.

- And Saint Paul speaks of a different journey and reminds us what lies at the root of our own, or better to say who lies at the root of our journey: Jesus Christ.
  - Saint Paul reminds us that the ultimate journey is to eternal life and that Jesus came to make this journey with us and for us.
  - This is the Gospel: That Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah of God was willing to suffer and to die out of love for us, and **that** love, powerful as it is, broke the bonds of sin and death.
  - This Love is the heart of our journey. Jesus Christ, God Himself, is the gift we are given, far greater than anything Naaman or the Samaritan leper.
  - And it is this love that not only makes eternal life possible, but also sets us on a journey far more immediate, one that lies at the heart not only of our salvation but of the Church as well.
  
- *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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*
  - These are the very last words of Jesus before He ascends into heaven, His marching orders if you will.
  - These words are also the most basic call each and every disciple receives, and from no less than the mouth of Christ Himself.
  
- We are in a time of transition:
  - We see it in our world with war and violence taking new forms in terrorism and human destruction.

- We see it in our country and not just in the election but the challenges we face in racism, poverty, issues of life and death and human dignity, of immigration.
- We see the transition in our Church as Pope Francis challenges us to go beyond our comfort zones and reach out to those on the periphery.
- We see the transition in our Archdiocese as Archbishop Lori responds both to the call of Pope Francis and to challenges in how we proclaim the Gospel by calling us together to pray and to reflect on how we work together.
- And we have seen that transition right here in our own parish, faced with financial and pastoral challenges along with limited resources (including a limited pastor). We are learning how to respond with new ways of thinking and acting, learning anew to reach out especially to those who are alienated from Christ or His Church.
- And with transition, comes change, and with change comes uneasiness, anxiety, even stress.
  
- So, what do we do. Well, if you are anything like me, you turn to that great prophet and theologian of our time: Julie Andrews who taught those curtain-clothed children (and, indeed, all of us) how to sing by going to back to the beginning, back to the basics:
  - When you read, you begin with A, B,C, when you sing you begin with Do, Re, Mi...the first 3 notes just happen to be...
  - Well, the basics for discipleship come in the Great Commission: Go make disciples...
  - So we, as a parish, are going back to the basics. We are going to take the next four weeks and unpack what it means to

“Go.” and what it means to “make disciples,” let alone what a “disciple” is.

- We will unpack who God is in this and how God uses us, where the community fits and what we can hope for, even and especially in a time of transition.
- These basics will help us understand where we are and how to listen to God to figure out where we’re going.
  
- Even with the anxiety and stress that can come with transition, we also recognize the opportunity we get in going back to basics, in listening anew to God’s call.
  - Jesus invites us to “cast out to the deep!” in our love, hope, and union with Him; Jesus beckons us to joy and hope and the service of others, to a faith that is alive and active in service
  - “You are far greater than you think you are,” He encourages us. “You are capable of greatness as disciples and as a community. You’ve been made for a destiny beyond your imagining.”
  - Even the transition is a reminder that it's really astonishingly good news: God so loved the world that He sent His only Son; the Son so loved the world that He established the Church to continue His saving mission. That’s where you and I join the adventure in fidelity and hope: we have the sacred responsibility to journey forward and to proclaim the Good News we have come to know.
  - “Oh, no, Lord, not us! Haven't you heard? Haven't you noticed! We're tired and struggling just to keep up. Our faith is sagging just keeping our heads above water.

- And that's why Jesus reminded his earliest disciples and he says the same to us this morning, I am with you ALWAYS, even in transition, even when you are struggling, even to the end of the age.
- So, we seek in these basics to renew our profound hope in God's care, His call, His loving providence, our conviction that, **without Him** nothing is **possible**, that, **with Him**, nothing is **impossible**, that He is with us even to the end of the world, that He never calls us to a task without providing us the grace to accomplish it.
- Many of you laugh when I drag out what for some has become a tag line: God loves us and loves us and loves us and NEVER stops loving us. Well, it's true and I stand behind it, in fact, I've staked my life on it. But I must admit that I haven't been as good about what that means. Sure it means that we operate from strength, that we believe we are good, created in God's image and likeness, that our sins are forgiven. But I may not have stressed the flip side enough.
- God does not demand anything from us in return in the same way Jesus did not ask anything of those lepers. Jesus gave them healing and sent them on their way. But like the one who returned, God loves when we come back, not merely to say "thanks" but to love Him in return.
- You see, God demands nothing, but appreciates everything. Like any lover, **GOD WANTS OUR HEART**. He want us to know of His love so we can return it and experience the delight he takes in us. That's one of those "basics" you'll be hearing about.
- Back to the Old Cambodian Proverb: So, we may not travel fast because we do not travel alone. But with God and one another, we can't go wrong and we will go far. Now, let's go, make disciples.