
**Homily – Feast of Saint Luke, evangelist
Healthcare Professional Mass – October 18, 2022**

Our gospel today speaks to us about the beginning of a missionary life. The first reading, from the Second Letter to Timothy, reflects on the twilight of St. Paul's long journey. Anyone resolved to dedicate his or her life to service, begins with an experience of joy and enthusiasm. However, God does not spare anyone from the inherent difficulties that come with following Jesus.

The personal testimony of Saint Paul in the last years of his life is harsh. The text we hear expresses the situation he is experiencing, along with very personal requests and recommendations. Paul expressly names Saint Luke: *"Luke is the only one with me."* The apostle's missionary tours are coming to an end due to the departure of some, the sending of others, and abandonment of Paul to his fate at the beginning of the long criminal process that would take him to Rome and to his death.

Immediately before the text of the first reading, there is a moving phrase: *"Try to join me soon."* That seems to be the background tone of everything he is saying. He feels abandoned and lonely. It is like a reverberation of the Lord's cry from the Cross: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Mt 27:46). In the reading, St. Paul is talking about the people and the things he misses, but he is not bitter or discouraged. He expresses a healthy realism that comes from knowing the human condition in depth, living forgiveness and absolute trust in the Lord.

Despite his human experience at the moment, St. Paul knows he is not alone. He knows he is being given strength from within by the Lord. He is bearing witness to the Lord's promise: *"I am with you always."* (Mt 28:20).

The same Luke who accompanied Paul, is the one who speaks to us in the gospel about the starting point of the disciples' missionary journey. Despite the Lord's warnings, he still commands them to go on their way. He is sending them as humble servants without possessions or power – without privileges – and as small communities, to prepare people for their encounter with Jesus through the promotion of peace and doing good on their way, as they announce the good news of the kingdom of God.

We are always sent anew, and we can renew our calling again with a rehabilitated purity, renewed in the confidence that the Lord keeps telling us: *“Go on your way!”* We are all called to bear witness to the One in whom we believe.

Pope Francis has said: *“Medicine is by definition service to human life, and as such it involves an essential and indispensable reference to the person in his spiritual and material integrity, in his individual and social dimension: medicine is service to man, to the whole man, every man. And you doctors are convinced of this truth on the basis of a very long tradition, which dates back to the Hippocratic intuitions; and it is precisely from this conviction that there arise your just concerns for the pitfalls to which today's medicine is exposed.”*

I invite you to renew the purity of your calling to the service of human life and human dignity. I entrust you to the care and the intercession of St. Luke and Our Lady of Guadalupe.