

When I served in the US Navy, we would deploy for up to six months at a time. The rules restricted us to 30 pounds of personal gear. When you're going to be gone for half a year, that's not an awful lot of stuff.

Just for an idea, 30 pounds is two bowling balls. Now, I know nobody is going to bring bowling balls. But a personal laptop weighed in at about 8 pounds. That's already ¼ of what we were allowed. Golf clubs? Don't count on it.

We had ways around the limits. We would stuff our pockets on our flight suits with things, wear two coats and fill those pockets as well. Some guys actually bought tags for some of their stuff that said "CLASSIFIED," so that it would look like mission equipment, and the inspectors wouldn't be able to look inside.

That might work for a laptop, but it sure wasn't going to work for golf clubs.

So, we would deploy with only 30 pounds of stuff. And then spend six months away. The return trip usually ended up with us giving away or throwing away all of the stuff we'd accumulated over the past six months.

We'd get back, and a few weeks later, we would deploy for another six months.

When we go on a trip, or on a vacation as a family, we tend to pack a lot of things, don't we? When you take a trip by car— doesn't it seem that you take just about everything? Pretty soon, there isn't much room for people to sit down inside — no matter how big the car or SUV is.

And when it's time to turn around and come home, it seems next to impossible to get it all back into the car.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his Apostles, "to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic."

That seems like an odd set of instructions to begin a missionary journey.

What is Jesus getting at?

I would think that there is a spiritual purpose behind these instructions.

The way I see it, Jesus is letting his Apostles see that they really DON'T need all the things they may think they need.

All they really need is GOD.

Before he gives those directions, Jesus first gives the Apostles "power" over unclean spirits and disease, so that they cure the sick as they go out on their preaching mission.

Jesus doesn't send them out with cartons of Bibles, or books of prayers, or boxes of medicine. Instead he sends them out with power, that is, with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Paul talks about this in the Second Reading when he says, "God ... has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens".

And the "power" Jesus sent his Apostles out with is also available to us.

As Saint Paul continues, "[we] have heard the word of truth, the gospel of [our] salvation, and have believed in him, [we] were sealed with the promised [H]oly Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's [own], to the praise of his glory."

We've just heard the Gospel. In a few minutes, we'll profess what we believe. And in the power of the Sacrament we will receive from this altar, we will receive the promised power and strength which is our inheritance from God.

WHO NEEDS ALL THIS OTHER STUFF?

Not that we should all go home and have a giant garage sale ... or maybe we should. But let's not get into that.

What I'd like us to reflect on this week is the question: Where is God's place in the midst of all of the stuff that we fill our lives with?

In the first place, do we THANK GOD for all the good things we have? God: thank you for my bike. God: thank you for my truck. God: thank you for my family.

In this little way, we bring God into play in the midst of all of the stuff.

And in some way, instead of filling our lives up with more and more stuff, we can make room for God each and every day.

Because, as Saint Paul says, "we were ... chosen ... for the praise of [God's] glory."

So, let's spend some time this week bringing God into the picture ... and as we pack in more and more of God into our lives, we will find ourselves becoming more and more the people He created us to become: holy, beloved ... adopted daughters and sons of the Father, redeemed in Christ, and filled with the Power of the Holy Spirit.