



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

4th Sunday in Lent – Year C

Ambassadors for Christ

Readings: Joshua 5: 9-12, Ps 33, 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21, Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

If I were to ask you what Werner Matías Romero, Jadranka Negodic, Tesfamicael Ogbaghiorghis and Roy Joy have in common I suspect you would be as blank as I was before I looked them up. If I added the clue that they were members of a group whose latest appointment was Paivi Luostarinen and whose longest serving member was Roy Blackbeard, I doubt it would be much help. Maybe if I said that they had all spent twenty minutes with the Queen at some point....

They are, in fact Ambassadors at the Court of St. James's. Don't ask me which country. I think Luostarinen is Finland and Blackbeard from Botswana but don't hold me to it.

Like all their fellow diplomats they will have been carefully trained in the art of foreign affairs, they will know which knife and fork to use and they will have their own intelligence network. Above all they will be here to represent the interests of their country, to care for their citizens and to make the case in matters of mutual interest and potential conflict.

In order to begin their task the monarch sends for them by state landau and whisks them up to the Palace. There they will have their allotted twenty minutes and, most importantly, present their credentials, the letter from the authorities in their own land appointing them to speak for their government and people. These are called 'letters of credence'. He or she is the 'believable and authorised' voice of the other country.

An Ambassador will, every day of his or her life, represent that other land. So it is with full knowledge of this awesome task and responsibility that St. Paul tells his Corinthian converts that they are 'Ambassadors for Christ'. And through this letter, inspired by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by the Church as Holy Scripture, God's Word for all time, Paul tells the universal Church throughout time that this is our task too.

The Church therefore represents the Kingdom of God to the kingdoms of this world. She holds in her hands those letters of credence which attest to the One whose authority she bears and whose monarch she represents and whose people she cares for. She presents her Creed, her Tradition and her Holy Book. She seeks the peace of the world but is permanently at war with those who seek to destroy man.

Above, St. Paul tells us, the ambassador for Christ is entrusted with an extraordinary message, the best news ever to echo in the ear of Man. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords has reconciled Man to Himself. He has taken our fallen nature and, through Christ, has made us a new creation. The mortal has put on immortality. The divine has transformed humanity. Eternity has overtaken time. Ambassadors of Christ bring news of the ultimate treaty, a welcome into the kingdom of love and joy and peace.

Now it might be comfortable to assume that this is the primary task of your deeply inadequate priests. It is. But it is also the primary task of the

deeply inadequate laity too. St. Paul does not differentiate here. The appointment of ambassadorship is to all the faithful at Corinth and all the faithful throughout time.

We represent today an unfamiliar, to many, country. We speak of a King they, for the most part, do not know. We present credentials they have never read. We speak of a peace treaty for a war of which they are scarcely aware yet which is costing them their lives.

How does this passage of Scripture help us in our task of evangelisation?

How does it encourage us to spread the news of salvation?

First it very simply reminds us of who we are and who we represent.

Say after me:

'I am an AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST.

I represent THE KING OF KINGS

My homeland is HEAVEN.'

Like any good Ambassador we will be daily in communication with our homeland through, in our case, prayer and the sacraments. We will regularly check our standing orders and our daily briefings, in our case the Holy Scriptures. Instructions in translating and interpreting and implementing will come from that department of Heaven that deals with Foreign Affairs – that is to say The Church. We will always represent our King in the place where we have been sent to serve.

For our part it is essential not only to be dutiful but to be plausible. So some simple questions. When I speak do people hear authenticity and conviction? When I talk of reconciliation am I a person who is clearly reconciled himself? When I speak of peace is there a tangible peace in me?

When I talk of God's love does it manifest in me? When I talk of joy is there any evidence? This is not to say we go around with an inane grin on our faces but does my life speak, however poorly, of a longing for that greater joy of which I have had but a foretaste? Do I represent Jesus? Would anybody mistake me for a disciple, a forgiven, grateful sinner who has been welcomed across the border and invited to become a citizen of Heaven, a loyal, loving subject of the Crucified King, Jesus Christ?

If I was the only Ambassador for Christ in my family, my club, my workplace what would others know about my King from watching and listening to me? On a good day would they catch a glimpse of Jesus?

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