



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C

### ***The Lord sent them out in pairs ahead of him***

*Readings: Isaiah 66: 10-14, Ps 65, Galatians 6: 14-18, Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20*

It has been a tumultuous ten days in the life of the nation. The political establishment is reported to be in meltdown. The Labour Party is attempting to unseat its elected leader for the cardinal sin of appearing to be more in touch with the nation than his parliamentary colleagues. The Conservative Party is now engaged in a process to replace the unsuccessful with anyone from the unlikely to the unthinkable. Meanwhile the Scots are unwrapping their Saltires and their first minister is threatening to take their subsidy claims elsewhere and dismantle the United Kingdom. Meanwhile the rudderless state sails on while the FTSE 100 recovers to its pre-referendum level and the Pound settles around its April '16 level – before all the wild speculation on a Remain win. There will be people here who are thrilled with the vote. There will be people who are upset. But as I said on St. Boniface Day the Christian community in Europe has a higher priority - whatever the result.

Christians are not indifferent to the life of the 'polis', the ordering of our earthly state but we do have a wider perspective and a more

comprehensive and durable manifesto in the Gospel. In today's Gospel, in fact, Jesus is doing something that is both intensely political as well as salvific and evangelistic. Jesus appoints seventy representatives to go ahead of Him into all the places He will visit. This number is not incidental. It is to establish His claim to be the one who is to come – greater than Moses. Moses, of course, appointed seventy elders to assist him in the governance of the People of God. Furthermore 'seventy' remains the number set for the supreme Sanhedrin of Israel in Jesus time. The government of Israel focuses on this supreme court with the High Priest making the casting vote. Every Jewish community in a city had its own Sanhedrin made up of those most trusted and faithful to the Divine Law.

Jesus is forming a parallel government and no Jew will have missed the symbolism of His decision. The point of this administration is not primarily to determine the day to day political life of the city or the nation, except insofar as that will flow from the central purpose of the salvation of Man.

It was not, as some hoped, to herald the exit of Israel from the Roman Empire. Neither was it an attempt to collaborate with Rome or get a new deal under a different king. But it was and is and always will be about a kingdom, an united kingdom under the ultimate sovereignty of God. To this end Jesus sends out the seventy. They go to everywhere that He will come. This is what is called pre-evangelism – preparing the way of the Lord. It is still the pattern of evangelism to this day.

They are sent out like lambs in the midst of wolves. It is a risky enterprise and dangerous. They will be attacked. They must travel simply and humbly and in pairs. Working in pairs is a profound Gospel principle allowing both prayer and engagement, witness and ministry, proclamation and response to go on together. With very rare exception people meet Jesus' representatives before they actually encounter Him. They will meet us, His disciples, before they meet Jesus.

Imagine if there were seventy faithful committed evangelists in every town in Cornwall! Yet that is part of the task of every disciple. What do the people hear from the seventy? They hear the Good News of the Gospel. They receive healing in the midst of their brokenness. They are made aware of the Real Presence of the Kingdom of God and its immanence in Jesus. What will they know of Jesus from encountering us?

The Church exists to bring people to a knowledge and love of Jesus. Then her task is to nourish them and lead them to Heaven. So, little brothers and sisters of Jesus, we are the pre-evangel. We are the ones whom Jesus has sent out ahead of Him. When people meet us will they want to meet the Lord? Will we tell them the Good News of Jesus or will we tell them what's wrong with the Church - with each other?

Will there be something about our lives, love and conduct that will resonate transformation, difference? Or will we be pretty much the same as everyone else?

If they come with us to Church will they encounter a community of Faith, flat out before the mercy seat of God, in awe of His majesty and grace? Or will our demeanour tell them nothing about the sacred Presence? Will they encounter a people hungry for the Word of God and the Apostles' teaching? Or will there simply be us wanting a blessing on our prejudices and preferences?

Will they see the door of reconciliation wide open and the joyful, unburdened absolved emerging into the profound thanksgiving of the Mass? Or us just clinging to the wreckage of self-righteousness?

When they come through the Portal of Our Lady will they encounter small clubs of the like-minded or will they meet friends of Jesus who welcome them home and walk with them?

Will they enter a fractured republic of competing interests or an United Kingdom whose borders are ever open to those who accept the sovereignty of the King of Kings?

These are questions for priests and people alike. They are the same questions for every community of Faith throughout the land. On the answer to these will depend whether our names are, with the seventy, written in Heaven.