



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Ash Wednesday-February 26th 2020

Readings: Joel 2: 12-18, Psalm 50, 2 Corinthians 5: 20-6:2,

Matthew 6: 1-6 16-18

‘WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST’ 2 Cor 5 v20

The old and cynical definition of an Ambassador was, ‘A man sent abroad to lie for his country.’ If I were to ask any of our various congregations to name one British Ambassador, currently in post, I would be astonished if even one name emerged. One or two folk might have a name of a retired ambassador newly wheeled into a studio to lament current government policy or the odd soul may remember a name of an ambassador who was assassinated – but for the most part we are blissfully ignorant of the personalities. And that is as it should be because an Ambassador, unlike a politician or a popstar, is not a celebrity. He is not there to advertise himself or promulgate his own, no doubt fascinating, opinions. He is there to represent his country. He is there to try to ensure that his mission explains to his hosts the policies and intentions of his government. To bring back to his government the questions, objections or approval of his hosts. To try to ensure peace, harmony and, where possible co-operation between nations.

By international convention, he has immunity – a privilege which he should never abuse. His embassy is technically part of the territory of his own sovereign state and thus inviolable. Of course, this doesn't always work out. Ambassadors like our own Richard Sykes and Christopher Ewart-Biggs were both murdered by the IRA in the 1970s. The American Embassy in Teheran was hijacked by the Ayatollah's mobsters.

So when St. Paul calls us to be ambassadors for Christ, he is all too aware both of the privilege and the potential cost.

Our task is to represent Christ – no less. To make the case for His governance. In so doing not to let ourselves, our idiosyncrasies, our half thought out opinions, get in the way of His eternal message.

There will be risks – there is very little immunity to be had these days.

Indeed, in many parts of the world the very embassy buildings, the sanctuaries, are targets of the militant demonic enemy.

Nonetheless the mission goes on. Emphasising Christ not ourselves, we seek to put the case for the Church of God, the policies of justice & peace & righteousness. For the unity of Man-made in God's image and under His sovereignty. For the need for repentance and turning back to the origin of our being, the font of love for mankind and the unique offer of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Lent is a good time for penitent self-effacement, remembering whose business we are about and representing Christ to this strange land in which we live and inviting the natives to the regular Embassy party – better known as the Mass