

## ***Fourteenth Sunday Per Annum (C)***

***July 3, 2016.***

*See I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves (Lk. 10:3).*

The commission of the seventy disciples to go and to prepare for Our Lord's own coming is a commission that continues through the ages. In a sense, all of us are also sent out in like manner. The reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation was our commission and we then received a special strength to witness to the Christian faith. Our long and varied history chronicles successes and failures in this regard. It is never easy to witness to our faith but when we do, the fruits are abundantly evident and everyone benefits. For example, in some parts of the world where Catholics constitute a minority, our educational institutions are among the best and many non-Catholics eagerly enroll their children in schools that provide an excellent intellectual and moral formation. Our long history has also witnessed to what is referred to as *Christendom: the political, economic, moral, social [and] legal life of a nation as inspired by the gospel ethic* (Archbishop Fulton Sheen, 1974). Our own nation, at least in its origin, was once thus governed. On other occasions I have shared with you this insight of the noted American prelate, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, spoken exactly forty-two years ago: *I believe that we are now at the end of Christendom, but not of Christianity....And I believe the sooner we face up to this fact, the sooner we will be able to solve many of our problems....We live in a world that challenges us. And many fall away....These are the times in which we live. They are therefore wonderful days; marvelous; we should thank God that we live in times like this.* These last sentiments are those of a saint. Nevertheless, even for those of us who may be more faint of heart, these words are true. We must never waver from a spirit of thankfulness and of hope.

In the two generations since this assessment was made, the changes that we have experienced especially in regard to the moral, social and legal life of our nation can only be described as exponentially tragic, but *this world is our battleground and into we are sent like lambs into the midst of wolves*; yet as the Prophet Isaiah assures us, *the hand of the Lord is with his servants* (66:14). Though the forces of the world are now at war with nature itself, for the very nature and purpose of the human person is now also the battleground, we must not lose heart and we must keep in mind the reassuring words of Our Lord: *See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you* (Lk. 10:19).

St Paul the Apostle rightly observed that our struggle is *against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness, in the heavenly places* (Eph. 6:12). Against these what is needed is the *whole armor of God: truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the equipment of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God and prayer and supplication* (Cf. Eph. 6:13-20). These are the arms that were used against the cruelty of pagan Rome, the violent superstition of Barbarians, the dehumanizing limits of rationalism, and the cruel tyranny of Fascism and Communism. We must now use these same arms against the dictatorship of relativism, the indifference of a materialistic culture of death and against the increasingly heartless overreach of the government. The traditional Catholic faith alone can restore a sense of piety, reverence and humility to a world that wages war on the very idea of the sacred; refusing in its pride

to acknowledge that there might exist any belief, institution, or code of conduct not subject to human revision.

In the struggle that is ours in our time and in our day, it is imperative that we rediscover a sense of the sacred for this alone will bring about the restoration of society and the renewal of the Church. We must deliberately endeavour to establish and foster a virtuous culture inspired by faith and the worship not of man but of God. In this effort, the role of the sacred liturgy as both the feast and school of faith cannot be underestimated for as we worship, so we will live; and as we worship, so will we become (*lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*). This must be our point of departure and our point of return; our source and summit, as it were. In practical terms, it means that we must seek first the Kingdom of God. Our Lord Himself exhorts us: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (Mt. 6:33)*. The disciples were sent out by Our Lord with a definite purpose; and upon their return, with joy they gave an account of their undertaking: *'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!'* Our life is not without purpose; and perhaps more than anything else, what is being asked of us as disciples of Christ is that we witness to life's goodness and purposefulness.

We endeavour then to live our lives in the awareness that there is an ultimate purpose to all our efforts and sacrifices. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which Our Lord has left us as the Memorial of His Passion gives meaning and purpose to all of our undertakings. In the Eucharist Our Lord feeds and nurtures us with His own Body and Blood. This is the great Mystery that we celebrate, profess, live and pray. Our personal prayer is always an extension of the great Prayer of the Mass. To this end, that we might always be united to the Sacrifice upon which we model our lives, I would like to invite all of you to join in our devotions in honour of Our Lord's Precious Blood. As you know, the month of July is dedicated to Our Lord's Precious Blood. I encourage all of you to take a prayer card from the Shrine of the Sacred Heart and to pray the Seven Offerings of the Precious Blood every day throughout this month and please God, beyond. I am convinced that if all of us offer these prayers daily, our prayer will transform our lives. A simple prayer offered preferably as we begin our day. These prayers of intercession come to us through the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood, the first contemplative community founded in Canada, in St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. Let these daily prayers be our very own *sword of the Spirit*. We will surely *share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God (2 Tim. 1:8)*; but here and in the domestic church of our families we continue to share the joy and goodness of the Gospel, confident in the conviction that history is continuously guided by Divine Providence. If history has taught anything, it has taught us that when the faith dies, the culture dies, the civilization dies, and the people begin to die. Yes, nations are mortal but God never dies and the Church of God, the remnant never wanes. So we *rejoice in hope, [we are] patient in tribulation [and] constant in prayer (Rom. 12:12)*. *These are the times in which we live. They are therefore wonderful days; marvelous; we should thank God that we live in times like this.*