

11am Trinity 17

There aren't many things that our Lord Jesus Christ and Lord Alan Sugar have in common. They are both Jewish men and they both get called 'Lord'. But that's probably where the similarities end. Except for the fact that in the Gospel given for today Jesus is doing his 'Apprentice' bit. He has chosen a few flawed and annoying people to be his inner circle. And, between tasks, Jesus has taken his team away from the crowds for a while – back to the boardroom, as it were. And just like Alan Sugar – well, ok maybe this comparison has run its course – Our Lord gives it to them straight: 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and be put to death. Then on the third day he will rise again'.

They didn't understand it then. But soon, these words would come true. And soon after that these same words would ring out across the world. The flawed, mis-understanding apostles would set out to fearlessly proclaim this same message as the most important thing the world has ever and will ever hear. They spoke these words in pagan temples, marketplaces, homes, and from executioners' blocks from Italy to India. And, as members of the same family, as baptized followers of Jesus, that is precisely what we are called to do today.

Just like the Apostles our calling is to tell people the most important news the world has ever heard. What God has done in Jesus Christ and what that means for us: the most exciting, inviting and transforming news. Truly Good News. This calling of ours cannot be ducked and it can't be ignored. By virtue of our Baptism, we today are Christ's inner circle. He gathered the Apostles, equipped and sent them. Since our Baptism, Jesus has gathered us together, equipped us with the strengthening grace of the Sacraments week by week, and daily He sends us to be His body in the world.

The question is, if we aren't going to get a placard and stand on Marylebone High Street (and I really don't advise that) what are we going to do? How can we be the evangelists we are all called to be in our daily lives?

This is exactly the kind of conversation that we should have with each other after church, with our families and Christian friends, with Fr Stephen or me. After all we are also to encourage and help each other in our vocation. But here are some things you could do right now, whether you are 3 or 103:

Pray. Pray for the people in your life. Pray for their growth in faith. Perhaps decide for a few weeks at a time to pray especially for a colleague or friend

in particular - that they would discover something of the great gift of a living relationship with Christ.

Pray. When people tell you that they're celebrating or in need. A friend, or a stranger. Tell them you're praying for them, and then *do*, of course. It's something I was embarrassed about when I first became a Christian with an active faith, but I have since discovered that the most unlikely of people are pleased to have prayer offered for them. Indeed I have never met a negative reaction when I have said, 'God bless you' or 'I'm keeping you in my prayers'.

Pray. And invite. Is there someone you know who is simply waiting to be asked, 'why don't you come to church and lunch with me this Wednesday, or this Sunday?' Another thing I have been very reticent to do, until I started doing it and found people were delighted to be asked. They either declined, not at all put-out by being asked or said 'yes, that'd be nice'. It's all about how you ask - and only you know the best way to speak to your friends, colleagues and loved ones. But it is amazing how many people are simply waiting for the invitation. Pray and invite.

Finally, something the 8.30 congregation were thinking about the other day. Gossiping the Gospel. Speaking of faith in everyday life - not artificially separating it off into a box in the corner of life. Speaking of God naturally, not weirdly. Is God a welcome guest at our family dinner table - isn't it weird if He isn't? Let's welcome the little children unto him as he asked. However old you are, why not share a Bible story at supper mid week? Why not pray before meals thanking God and offering Him the events of the day? Is faith, prayer, church, the Eucharist a natural part of our vocabulary at home and work? Things we speak about with love and purpose?

This is the most important news the world has ever or will ever hear, and it is our task, the calling of every single Christian to make it heard. To speak and act with Love and purpose. No one is going to do it for us. We are God's lips, eyes, hands and feet. If we don't gossip the Gospel, if we don't pray, talk about prayer, invite people in, then no one will.

And despite what the newspapers say, what is at stake is not our 'membership figures', like a kind of holy golf club. Nor our buildings, like a religious wing of the National Trust. What *is* at stake, what we are being *joyfully* and *urgently* invited to be a part of is the salvation of the world. The freedom of humanity from death and pain and sin, the raising up of the poor and oppressed, the end of loneliness and fear. He rose on the third day that we might rise with Him. This is the Good News that will not wait for another - we must get on with it now.