

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## Naked Trust

Not quite naked, but without visible security the Twelve are sent out by Christ. It's as if they are returning to the nomadic way of life of their ancestors. The image we have of Abraham is of someone who abandoned his settled life - in Chaldean Ur, one of the oldest cities on earth - in exchange for a life of wandering, trusting God for the next drink of water and the next patch of grazing for the sheep. Only when we townies move house do we realise how much baggage we've got; after a brief flurry of editing, we move into a new space, and the same clutter builds up there. Nomads cut all possessions to the minimum, so that travelling becomes more tolerable. Perhaps you find out what you really need, what is truly indispensable for living. When you arrive somewhere, you appear as a person in need: and those amongst whom you go must welcome you and see to your needs. So for apostles it isn't just a matter of trusting God; they are to trust the people they are sent to, and their poverty or prosperity will depend on the reception that is given to the Word they preach. In some deep way, therefore, the apostles share the fate of the Gospel itself, and are joined to Christ, who set out from his Father's side to bring us the Gospel. He found both acceptance and hospitality, and rejection of the most total possible kind: and the final response was rejection in the total terms of crucifixion.

### A Provisional Way Of Life

It certainly doesn't sound like a well-planned, secure way of life. In the archives of a parish I used to serve, there was a letter from the priest to the Bishop, in which he said that without the pension of his aged mother, who had moved into the Presbytery, he could not have afforded to eat. I don't think they were deliberately mean to their priest: they just didn't realise that he depended on them for everything. In the end, he would have been hauled out by the Bishop and sent somewhere more appreciative: that would have been the shaking of dust from his feet! Still, the link between that man's ministry and his own fate was very real. He could honestly say that he

shared the fate of the Gospel, in a way the Gospel tells us to. That must have made his witness very realistic.

### Purify Our Motives

I often find myself musing on the motives for our good deeds. When we're in a community, there's much to persuade us to be good: we want to be well-thought-of by others; we want to live in peace; we value an atmosphere of respect and are prepared to do our bit to make it happen. None of these motives will make martyrs out of us: they're easy to dismiss as enlightened self-interest. I won't throw stones at your windows if you promise not to put mine in either: it's a social contract, where we all come out as winners. We only enter the realm of the Kingdom of Heaven when these worldly motives no longer apply: when it costs us to live in the Kingdom, and we make sacrifices to do so. This is what makes telly-evangelism so unbelievable: it offers the best of both worlds: prosperity on earth, with cash in the bank in heaven. O for repentance!

### Take Nothing For The Journey

I doubt whether the 21<sup>st</sup> century will see the simplification of anyone's life, unless the eco-system breaks down, the power-stations close, the electricity shuts off and the water turns septic. But it's worth noting that, from time to time, our life does return us to that situation of total dependence that Jesus wanted for his apostles. When you need the forgiveness of another person: when you meet a consultant and he opens your X-rays: when you offer to marry the person you love: when you take your new-born child in your arms....there are many other moments when your life hangs in the balance and you haven't the slightest way of dictating the outcome. When these times come, something holy can happen, which teaches us how to live humbly, how to kill off our awful arrogance and faked self-sufficiency. You know in such moments how little it matters to be rich or powerful, and how greatly it matters to be honest and selfless. Perhaps these can be our times of conversion, and make us apostles. *Fr Philip*