

Ambassadorship The Art of Being Odd for Christ and Yet Attractive



by Dan Reilly

Called to proclaim His message.

Ambassadorship for Christ involves a complete surrender of one's own agenda to that of the One who sends us.

The title of ambassador is one of the highest honours a head of state can give to a civil servant or previous member of government. The position entails the best seats at ceremonial functions, an entire staff to do your bidding, and a large expense account.

Foreign heads of state must accord you the same respect they would grant your head of state. At the same time, the position involves a complete surrender of one's own agenda to that of the One who sends you. You represent the head of state and your own ideas and thoughts are inconsequential.

One of the key functions of an ambassador is to convey messages from the leadership of the home country to the

leadership and population of a foreign country. We are each ambassadors for Christ in different places and different walks of life. Christ's key message was one of reconciliation. He invited those who were far from God to come closer. All were welcome to join the kingdom, to emigrate, to escape bondage and come to freedom. Christ came to proclaim this message, and then, to make it

Dan Reilly is a CMDS member and an OBG practitioner in Fergus, Ontario.

possible by his death and resurrection.

Those who were already in the foreign kingdom, who were supposed to be God's ambassadors, failed to recognize him. The religious leaders of the day failed to recognize that Jesus came from the King they claimed to serve. This failure arose from a misunderstanding of the message of the kingdom, from interfering personal agendas, and from distractions caused by a focus on surface issues.

We can become comfortable being members of God's chosen and lose track of our task.

The religious leaders thought the King wanted perfect obedience to His rules in order to earn admittance to His kingdom. They worked hard to obey the rules and were proud of their achievements. This message suited their agenda of superiority. They enjoyed the power and privilege that came with being "God's chosen" and didn't want anyone else to compete with them. Rules only **they** could obey defended their positions of power. Jesus said of them:

"They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see: ...they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'" (Matt. 23:4-7)

Jesus' message of reconciliation threatened their superiority and power. If reconciliation is impossible to achieve on our own, but is as easy as accepting

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forgiveness, then anyone could become one of God's chosen. The tax collector could enter God's kingdom by asking, but all the religious leaders' hard work amounted to nothing!

Rather than accept this radical new message as being from the King, the religious leaders needed some way to dismiss this Jesus as "not of God." They found the rationale for rejecting Him in the way He conducted Himself. Jesus summarized this by noting:

For John [the Baptist] came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon" The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her actions." (Matt. 11:18-19)

The religious elite had been threatened by John the Baptist some years earlier but had dismissed him as a lunatic. He lived in a cave and was never seen eating or drinking. He obviously was demon possessed! Christ was observed eating and drinking, but in the company of

those the religious leaders knew were far from the kingdom. Obviously Jesus was not of the kingdom.

Two thousand years later, Christ's ambassadors are still called to proclaim the Good News of God's kingdom and to live in a sacrificial and loving way to encourage reconciliation between sinner and God. But we can become comfortable being members of God's chosen and lose track of our task. We are still prone to defining kingdom membership by compliance with superficial rules of behaviour that we can easily follow but that keep those we do not like separate from us.

We are called to represent Christ. The message is too important to allow ourselves to get off message. Living Christ-like purity, in a sinful world, will make us as odd as John the Baptist. Living Christ-like love in a selfish and uncaring world will make us as attractive as Christ.

Can we be accused of being different from the world and yet a "friend" to those who are lost? Or is the accusation that we add to the burdens of others and seek superiority, more accurate? f

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(Gems by Wayne Elford, our CMDS Planned Giving Coach)

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- Therefore, you get a charitable tax receipt for the value of the RRSP or RRIF, and avoid the inclusion of the RRSP / RRIF fund in your estate (thus evading probate fees).
- And, a charity that you value, has received a charitable gift. f