

Homily 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2026

There's a comedian, Micky Flanagan, who observes that British people have different levels of going out: you might pop out" for a quick drink, then find yourself out", and eventually end up out out"—a full-blown night involving pubs, clubs, and staying out far longer than intended. Flanagan's descriptions of the phrase out out" became his signature catchphrase and one of his best-known routines. Going 'out out' means going out with no half measures.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples to 'Go out, instructing them, Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Proclaim as you go, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.' There are no half measures in Jesus' command and, we might say, his command is 'Go out (out)' to the sheep because they are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Although churches are essential for Liturgical Assembly there is an argument that we over rely on buildings to the detriment of our Christian/Catholic DNA to Go out (out)". In my own parish of Holy Redeemer, we are blessed with a dynamic outward looking community of laity who are constantly reaching out and Going out (out)" to the sick, the elderly, the infirmed, the differently-abled, the lonely, the vulnerable etc. It is so heartening to observe Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers at every Mass, approach the altar, receive their pyx containing The Blessed Sacrament and Go out (out)" with no half measure to the housebound members of the parish community.

The Early Christian Community elders, presbyters and deacons constantly Go out (out)", Acts describes how "...day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes. (Acts 2:46). Priests and deacons Go out (out)" with no half measures to where the people are, at The Temple and in their homes. When I was growing up the clergy seemed to be much more active in going out". Every year the Parish Priest and curates would carry out their visitation to every family in parish, spending quality time in their company. The clergy would regularly, if not weekly, visit the housebound hearing Confessions and distributing The Eucharist, mainly focussing on the sick, frail and vulnerable. Every few years there would be a Parish Mission and during the Mission Week the band of 'Missioners' would also visit every home in the parish. These shepherds" knew their sheep, their worries, their challenges, their difficulties, their reasons to celebrate joyful occasions such as a significant birthday or anniversary. They had the smell of the sheep."

Of course, we might say that times have moved on: we don't have the same numbers of priests, and many are elderly; we now have a more active and involved laity in Church ministry; priests 'are run off their feet' in attending to parish business etc. Much of this is true but perhaps we need to return to the core business of the ministerial priesthood: to proclaim The Gospel; to preside over The Sacraments with his flock; to build up Christian Community and 'Go out (out)" with no half measures to the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, the blind, the marginalised and downtrodden and Go and tell everyone The joy of The Gospel and the Good News of God's Kingdom.

Perhaps this is a 'Kairos moment', 'a moment of opportunity'(Tomás Halik), in the life of The Church to return to the days of, Going out (out)' and 'lift heavy burdens from people's shoulders!"