



SUNDAY 14 JULY 2024
DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Fifteenth Sunday of the Year (B): Mark 6:7-13

“Eee, you haven’t changed a bit!” was the comment from someone I hadn’t seen for many years. It was meant as a compliment and accepted as such. But if I hadn’t changed a lot over that time, I’d be seriously frustrating God’s designs.

Life’s demands, unexpected events, the care of others, the work we do and the friends we acquire all stretch our views and abilities. Adapting, learning, improvising, failing and succeeding are all descriptions of wobbly growth. We wander off piste. Being where we’ve never been before, navigating new terrain and unforeseen difficulties serve to speed up our brain’s neuron traffic big time.

Jesus began sending the Twelve out to do what he did. Working in pairs was a great support. It chanced comment and insight. These men went out in trust with barely anything but the clothes they were wearing – and the power of God. Unencumbered by baggage they relied on God’s Spirit and trusted in the kindness of strangers. It’s a risky business. I hope we do it more than we suspect. Allowing the Lord to work through us, we find him already ahead of us.

We shouldn’t be surprised. The God who chose us before the world was made, never fails to teach. It’s sad if we fail to learn. In the hands of God we are our greatest resource. Pondering and reflection are requirements. They don’t leave us unchanged. Watch Jesus – the plight of the poor and the needy are the drivers of change.

Often our life experience and the activity of God are not seen as the work of the Spirit or described in religious language. When the waters of baptism were poured over us we entered into partnership with God’s Spirit. Becoming like Jesus – we call it Christening – is a process, not an isolated event. We’re walking through the waters of baptism all our lives.

Be still. Don’t overlook today’s second reading from the letter to the Ephesians. Descriptions of ourselves tumble over one another in an attempt to expose our identity (Ephesians 1:3-14. Read it. Slowly and more than once). We do pray that the Father will open the eyes of our minds. It happened to the Twelve. May it continue in us.



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Pope Francis on kindness

Saint Paul describes kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*) - an attitude that is gentle, pleasant and supportive, not rude or coarse. Individuals who possess this quality help make other people’s lives more bearable, especially by sharing the weight of their problems, needs and fears.

Kindness frees us from the cruelty that at times infects human relationships, from the anxiety that prevents us from thinking of others, from the frantic flurry of activity that forgets that others also have a right to be happy. Often nowadays we find neither the time nor the energy to stop and be kind to others, to say ‘excuse me’, ‘pardon me’, ‘thank you’. Yet every now and then, miraculously, a kind person appears and is willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference. If we make a daily effort to do exactly this, we can create a healthy social atmosphere in which misunderstandings can be overcome and conflict forestalled. Kindness ought to be cultivated; it is no superficial bourgeois virtue. Precisely because it entails esteem and respect for others, once kindness becomes a culture within society it transforms lifestyles, relationships and the ways ideas are discussed and compared. Kindness facilitates the quest for consensus; it opens new paths where hostility and conflict would burn all bridges.

- ***Fratelli tutti*** - ***paras 223-224***