



SUNDAY 17 MAY 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

5th Sunday of Easter (A): John 14: 15-21

“Are you afraid of dying, Tom?” one of our priests asked a terminally ill old man. “No, no Father”, he said. “I think that when I die, God will sit me on his knee and explain the meaning of my life to me - and I’m looking forward to that”. This old boy understood that there’s far more to us than we usually think.

We have shorthand labels for people - she’s a career, he’s a painter, she’s a grandma, he’s an uncle. Handy and necessary to describe jobs or relationships, but no two people are alike. And when it comes to personal qualities we can pigeonhole individuals mercilessly. He’s stupid, she’s mean. We may never allow for change. It’s not difficult to lock people for life into a judgement we formed because of a single incident. We hate it if it happens to us and shout ‘unfair’, because it is. We are bigger than the image others hold about us, no matter how good it might be. And we are bigger than the ways we think about ourselves.

Have you ever done something you never thought possible for you - learnt a new language, ran a marathon, made a public speech or whatever? There’s potential and depth within us that will never be explored if we don’t believe it or attempt something outside our comfort zone. If we wear the suit others create for us and never make our own we’ll short-change who we are.

Jesus talks warmly about sending us the Spirit of truth and we can get acquainted with the Spirit because it’s within us by God’s gift. It prompts, coaxes and challenges us to become familiar with the reality of a God of love and compassion and about you who are made in his image and likeness. This side of the grave we don’t know who we are entirely. Trust that the full story is safe with God.

The Lord’s language is daring. He talks of himself being in the Father and he, Jesus, being in us and we being in him. This is not like one of those Russian dolls, one inside the other. It’s not physical, and if we develop a habit of reflecting on God’s Spirit who accompanies us always, we can begin to see possibilities in every challenge.

The blunt truth is that God has drawn us into his life, and he cares for his people through you and me. It’s mad. It’s reckless. But it’s a love bigger than the daftest things love, as we know it, sometimes does. Keep on thinking about the fascinating mystery you are. One of the consequences, and crucial for learning, is to keep his commandments and not just be chuffed about God being in us and then not striving to care for others. We’re givers not takers. Don’t hide your light. You’re meant to shine. Wow!



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Pope Francis shares his vision for Covid-18 aftermath

Pope Francis has presented “a plan for the rising up again” of humanity in which he reflects on the coronavirus pandemic in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. He says our experience today mirrors in many ways that of the disciples of Jesus after his death and burial in the tomb. Like them, we live surrounded by an atmosphere of pain and uncertainty, and we ask, who will roll away the stone from the tomb?

He recalls that the women who went to the tomb did not allow themselves to be paralysed by anxiety and suffering. Many today are following suit, including doctors, nurses, people stocking the supermarket shelves, caretakers, people who transport goods, public security officials, volunteers, priests, women religious, grandparents, teachers and so many others.

Francis says many are participating in the passion of Christ today, either personally or at the side of others, and he reminds everyone that we are not alone; the Lord goes before us on our journey, and removes the stones that paralyse us. This is the hope that no one can take from us. The disciples of Jesus discovered something that we are now learning - no one is saved alone. He describes the present moment as a time to be open to the Spirit, who can inspire us with a new imagination of what is possible. The breath of the Spirit opens horizons, sparks creativity and renews brotherhood and makes us say, ‘I’m present’ in the face of the enormous and urgent task that awaits us. He recalls that the Spirit does not allow itself to be closed in or manipulated by fixed or outmoded methods or decadent structures but rather moves us to make new things.

At this moment in history we have recognised the importance of joining the entire human family in the search for sustainable and integral development. For better or worse, all our actions affect others because everything is connected in our common home, and if the health authorities order that we remain confined in our home, it is the ordinary people who make this possible, aware of their co-responsibility in stopping the pandemic.

We cannot allow ourselves to write the present and future history by turning our backs on the suffering of so many people. If we act as one people then we can have a real impact. Are we capable of acting responsibly in the face of the hunger suffered by so many in a world where there is in fact food for all? Will we continue looking the other way in the face of wars fuelled by the quest for domination and power? Are we willing to change our style of life that puts so many in poverty, by promoting and encouraging a more austere and human lifestyle that makes a more equitable sharing of resources possible? Will we adopt, as an international community, the necessary measures to stop the devastation of the environment, or will we continue to deny the evidence of the devastation? Will the globalisation of indifference continue threatening our journey?

Pope Francis expresses the hope that, in the light of the resurrection, we would encounter the necessary antibodies of justice, charity and solidarity to change the world. He calls for the building of a civilization of love and hope, contrary to one marked by anguish and fear, sadness and discouragement, passivity and tiredness. This civilization has to be built daily and requires the commitment of everyone.