



SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 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

27th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 21: 33-43

Unemployment had made George an angry man. His workplace had been a casualty of some multinational outfit's plans. I met him when he was delivering party political flyers before an election. He had passionate views about empire-builders who had no regard for others' livelihoods.

We're not short of opinions about leadership, whether in political or religious institutions. Everyone has views about how we should be governed and cared for. To put yourself forward to lead others may well mean you'll need to expect criticism as well as praise. George was clear in his views about abuses of leadership when people are exploited in order that others may line their pockets and disregard the very workers who make business possible.

Leadership is a call to serve. The debate is often about who is serving who. Whose needs are being met? In today's Gospel reading Jesus characterises the chief priests and elders of the people as tenants of a vineyard. The vineyard in question is the people entrusted to their care. The servants who came to check and collect produce were the prophets who were treated at least dismissively and even worse. The leaders had usurped their positions to serve their own purposes rather than care for the people.

Finally, God the landowner sends his Son - but he is put to death, eliminated because he is seen to stand in their way rather than be acknowledged and recognised as the rightful Master of the work of care entrusted to these leaders. It's another story about power and how it is exercised. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and told these trainee leaders that he is here to serve and they need to do the same (John 13:13-15).

Many commonly feel there is a dearth of real leadership in the world today. We may feel that media news channels more easily show glaring examples of self-serving and divisive governance than coverage of the good done with less publicity and often taken for granted because it is quite simply right. The complexities of today's world render any decision making likely to perhaps incur some unsought or unwelcome side effects.

You can't please everyone and to attempt that is foolhardy. But our sense of the 'common good' and the means taken to honour human dignity require of us nothing short of apprenticeship to Jesus, who came among us as one who serves and still does. He lives in you and me. Leads through you and me. Study his style, recognise the cost, and follow the leader.



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More from Pope Francis

Beginning in the middle of the last century and overcoming many difficulties, there has been a growing conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home. An interdependent world not only makes us more conscious of the negative effects of certain lifestyles and models of production and consumption which affect us all; more importantly, it motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries. Interdependence obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*.

Yet the same ingenuity which has brought about enormous technological progress has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environmental and social problems worldwide. A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problem, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries. Such a consensus could lead, for example, to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water.

In the face of possible risks to the environment which may affect the common good now and in the future, decisions must be made "based on a comparison of the risks and benefits foreseen for the various possible alternatives". This is especially the case when a project may lead to a greater use of natural resources, higher levels of emission or discharge, an increase of refuse, or significant changes to the landscape, the habitats of protected species or public spaces. Some projects, if sufficiently studied, can profoundly affect the quality of life in an area due to very different factors such as unforeseen noise pollution, the shrinking of visual horizons, the loss of cultural values, or the effects of nuclear energy use. The culture of consumerism, which prioritises short-term gain and private interest, can make it easy to rubber-stamp authorizations or to conceal information.

Laudato Si paragraphs 164 and 184