



SUNDAY 9 JUNE 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

10th Sunday of the Year (B): 3: 20-35

He was looking worn out. Bill was usually ok and looked after himself. But there's an election coming up and he was out canvassing, confronting apathy and indifference. He was never one for sitting on the fence and wasn't happy that anyone else should either.

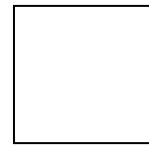
Standing up for people's rights, calling out and naming injustice, passionately working for the common good and attending meeting after meeting were putting dark rings round his eyes. I'd watched him reasoning with people, listening keenly to conflicting views, being ready to challenge where necessary and applaud readily when human dignity and welfare were upheld and worked for. Bill was a grafter and a man of faith, the kind you want with you, not against you.

We're all made in the image and likeness of God. We're not other people's property, to be used, manipulated or short-changed. Today's Gospel is blunt. Jesus' relatives were set on wanting to take him in hand, convinced he was out of his mind! I love that. It's family stuff. When you're overdoing it, run off your feet, at everyone's beck and call and not eating properly then those who love you move in, especially if the authorities are giving you a bad press.

Jesus uncompromisingly opposed evil and injustice. The big guns didn't like it. They never do. Scrutiny and exposure, especially from fearless people with penetrating insight will arouse opposition and attempts to discredit will follow. Jesus carries the torch for humanity. He won't go away or desist. Any attitude that diminishes the dignity of individuals is alien to the God of mercy and compassion, is out of step with the will of the Father.

Arrogance and cronyism, the disregard for the powerless poor by authoritarian and self-serving regimes drew stern criticism from Jesus. He is forever opposed to compromise and dishonesty. A man of the people, who spent himself to uphold the sacred and inalienable right of every person to be shown respect and be valued. To work at that 24/7 could be thought to be over the top by others less equally active.

A story about the French priest St John Vianney comes to mind. He spent most of the day hearing confessions, living frugally and drawing big crowds anxious to hear the Gospel. Some of his fellow clergy reported him to the Bishop, claiming he was mad. The Bishop replied that he wished they would show some of the same madness. My mate Bill might seem over the top in what he's fighting for. We could do with more like him.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Pope Francis—The Church is the Body of Christ

Insidious worldliness is evident in a number of attitudes which appear opposed, yet all have the same pretence of 'taking over the space of the Church'. In some people we see an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God's faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time. In this way, the life of the Church turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few. In others, this spiritual worldliness lurks behind a fascination with social and political gain, or pride in their ability to manage practical affairs, or an obsession with programmes of self-help and self-realisation. It can also translate into a concern to be seen, into a social life full of appearances, meetings, dinners and receptions. It can also lead to a business mentality, caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the church as an institution.

The mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is not present; closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ.

Evangelical fervour is replaced by the empty pleasure of complacency and self-indulgence.

- The Joy of the Gospel—para 95