



SUNDAY 11TH FEBRUARY 2018

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Sixth Sunday of the Year

Ever been in a church - or any other religious place - and no-one spoke to you, gave you any welcome, acknowledgement or recognition? It's not a good feeling. It should not happen here - in your parish or throughout our partnership. Not knowing someone is not a problem but an invitation.

In Jesus' time lepers were banned from villages and towns - the first reading at Mass today describes the routines they had to follow to warn "the acceptable" people and to keep their distance. They were excluded from the temple and from their families. When Jesus healed the leper in today's Gospel story, he didn't just take away the awful disfigurements and sores of the man's disease, he gave him his life back again. He was now one of the acceptable people and no longer one of the untouchables.

Leprosy is not common in our country today, though it's still a recognised disease affecting some people. However, being treated like an outcast, as being not part of the gang, of the in-crowd, the clique, the community's inner circle is still very much with us. Feeling you don't belong or not being made to feel welcome is distinctly unpleasant and can even be damaging.

With Jesus, everyone was welcome and he worked hard with the scribes and pharisees, those who thought they were a cut above others and behaved accordingly, to challenge their mindset. He ate with and consorted with the outcasts, those written off by the so-called good guys. He raised the profile and esteem of the sick and the outcasts - they are loved completely by our Father in heaven and Jesus was repeatedly emphatic in showing it. Our task is the same. The stranger is a friend you have yet to know. It's the gospel truth.



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"What renders a culture invulnerable is the compassion it shows to the vulnerable." -- Rabbi Jonathan Sachs

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"Experience is not what happens to you. It's what you do with what happens to you." -- Aldous Huxley

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"Jesus was himself the one convincing and permanent miracle." -- Ian McLaren

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"We do the works but God works in us the doing of the works." -- St Augustine of Hippo

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"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." -- Adopted by United Nations Organisation, 10th December 1948

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"If thou hast seen thy brother, thou hast seen God." -- St Clement of Alexandria

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"In so far as you do these things to the least of these, you do them to me." -- Jesus (Matthew 25:40)

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"Commit a sin twice and it will no longer feel like a crime." -- The Talmud (Judaic text)