



SUNDAY 19 MAY 2019

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 friend of mine once asked his ageing father if his father loved him - "Because", he said, "You never said you did". His father was hurt. He was also pretty mad. "What do you think I was doing all those years, taking on extra work whenever I could, earning a bit extra here and there to put bread on the table and so that me and your mother could give you a good and safe upbringing. I worked my fingers to the bone for you kids! What was all that saying? Of course I loved you! How come you didn't understand?" And he cried. We all have different ways of showing love. Some individuals are not demonstrative, others are clearer in word and gesture.

Jesus spent himself for people. We don't know what his voice was like, his facial expressions and actions we can only speculate about, but hey, did he care! Over and over he is giving his time to folks - receiving their sick and troubled, their old and disabled, the living and the dead. He got a put-down reputation of welcoming and eating with sinners. He was often in dodgy company, teaching by his manner and his words, giving frequent, consistent and clear signals that God loves everyone totally, unconditionally and indiscriminately. It includes you and I, thank God.

He doesn't ask, but commands us that we love one another as he loves us. The people of his time could see and hear him and knew what they had to copy. Their stories have been passed on to us so we can model ourselves on him. In whatever ways we make his style our own, he indicates that it should be clear enough for everyone to get the message that we're his disciples, his students, learning to be like him. What an assignment he's given us. It can't be casual. It requires thought and choices and decisions about how we do it.

Some thought might be given to his own description of himself. "Learn from me", he said, "I am gentle and humble in heart". (Matthew 11:29) Can that be you? "In an increasingly blunt and aggressive society can this give shape to how we relate to people - to teenagers, to people begging, to frustrated and complaining people? How would Jesus do it - because he's asking that we love like he does; we're doing his work now.

We can say wonderful words of appreciation about people when they die. Don't wait. Speak your love, plainly and often. The Lord not only requires it, he loves others through you and you through others. We're apprenticed to him, for life.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

The Pope who chose to be called Francis

His baptismal Christian name is George. But his huge concern for the poor prompted his choosing to be named after a saint who embraced poverty and shared the life of poor people. His encyclical letter (that's a circular letter to you and I) on the environment, called 'Laudato Si', meaning praise be to you, O Lord, is subtitled 'On care for our Common Home'.

It's addressed to everyone in the world and is a very good read. It's the Pope's addition to the teaching of the Church and underwrites much of what we are being given about saving our planet, part of God's creation. Here are some excerpts from the letter:

If we approach nature and the environment without openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled - (para 11).

Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. - (para 12).

My urgent appeal is for dialogue. Let's tackle this together! There is a worldwide ecological movement, but powerful forces oppose it, while most people simply go their merry way and ignore the problem as though it will go away on its own. Others have come to believe that nothing can be done to repair the ecological damage we see. And still others think that all we need is more technology and development, as though adding to the problem will fix it. What I believe we need is a new and worldwide solidarity of will and talent to care for God's creation.- (para 14).

Certain themes will be evident throughout this letter. These will include the close relationship between the poor and the fragile planet; the belief that we are all connected; the way in which we understand economics, technology, and progress; the belief that every person has dignity; the truly serious need for international policy; and the need for an honest dialogue about how to proceed, imagining a new and more sustainable lifestyle for us all. - (para 16).