



SUNDAY 7 MAY 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

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## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

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### 5th Sunday of Easter (A): John 14: 1-12

The years don't only tick by, they seem to race. The body counts the years too. I can't dash up the stairs like I did - or dash anywhere for that matter.

Long term, when end-of-days-thinking claims some of our sober or tentative plans, can we manage or are we to be cared for? None of us wants to be helpless, left out or neglected. Human dignity is sacred, always precious and it makes demands. We're living longer and we're not made of steel. The quality of our life, being appreciated and helped when we can't do for ourselves invades our thinking. We can't turn the clock back. Attending funerals of family or friends inevitably reminds us of our mortality.

The Gospel we hear today is often heard at funerals. Jesus has no illusions of how he'll be missed and he knows his own death is close. But he cares about what will happen to his followers. Beyond any anxiety about increasing age and declining health, he assured them and us that he'll come back for us all. Our end is a new beginning. An introduction to our true and forever home. A place of love, beyond pain and worry, the total solution to our fears and an entry into the hospitality of God. We're in safe hands.

In the meantime he continues to teach us. The lesson today has the apostles Thomas and Philip as the fall guys. They ask good questions, wanting more detail after tantalising words of reassurance. Their earthbound thinking - and ours - is being radically challenged. The way to our home is a person. Jesus is our companion. Look no further. He's everything reliable, all embracing. There's no one and nothing safer.

But Philip is curious. I often think he represents us. At Jesus' mention of the Father, Philip's request for an introduction draws from the Lord the fabulous news - if you see me, you see him. It's beyond the life shared by identical twins - Jesus and the Father are so intertwined that there's no difference. This is God, what he looks like. Love that kickstarts and powers creation is standing here, given to us in a human face, words and gestures. Life itself is staring at us in Jesus of Nazareth. God is doing all the work for us, translating what love looks like into human speech, laughter and sacrifice.

And there's more. Jesus puts flesh on religious words, simplifies God's presence into terms of friendship. By invitation and challenge he calls you and me to carry the life of God for him now because he's returning to the Father. What awesome trust. Only enormous love could chance such a dangerous thing. But it's where we are, grappling with wanting to understand better and, on a good day, daring to believe that our God with a human face believes in us. You couldn't make it up.



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### **Pope Francis speaking about equality**

Faith has untold power to inspire and sustain our respect for others, for believers come to know that God loves every man and woman with infinite love and thereby confers infinite dignity upon all humanity. We likewise believe that Christ shed his blood for each of us and that no one is beyond the scope of his universal love. If we go to the ultimate source of that love which is the very life of the triune God, we encounter in the community of the three divine Persons the origin and perfect model of all life in society. Theology continues to be enriched by reflection on this great truth.

I sometimes wonder why, in light of this, it took so long for the Church unequivocally to condemn slavery and various forms of violence. Today, with our developed spirituality and theology, we have no excuses. Still, there are those who appear to feel encouraged or at least permitted by their faith to support varieties of narrow and violent nationalism, xenophobia and contempt, and even the mistreatment of those who are different. Faith, and the humanism it inspires, must maintain a critical sense in the face of these tendencies, and prompt an immediate response whenever they rear their head. For this reason, it is important that catechists and preaching speak more directly and clearly about the social meaning of existence, the fraternal dimension of spirituality, our conviction of the inalienable dignity of each person, and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters.

**- Fratelli tutti paras 85-86**