



SUNDAY 1 NOVEMBER 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

Feast of All Saints: Matthew 5:1-12

Do you have a certain way of saying your mobile phone number? If someone reads it back to you with pauses in different places to your preferred way of saying it, does it throw you? It does me.

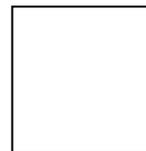
Most of us have ways of remembering things - the rhyme that reminds you of the colours of the rainbow, perhaps the way you remember a name, a face, a birthday or someone's address. If I change the car, I work out an imaginative way of remembering the new number plate. A teacher in my early days had colourful stories and abbreviations he'd pass on as useful ways of recalling significant information. It all helps.

Some of the Old Testament prophets had ways of teaching that were memorable. Before the age of printing many folks would have no access to written material. Perhaps their memories were better because they needed to be. Teachers created ways of teaching that increased the chance of their lessons being remembered. Rhythm and repetition were useful devices alongside anecdotes and brilliant stories.

Our Feast of All Saints gives us Matthew the Gospel-writer's version of the Beatitudes - a role call of the kind of individuals who are saints among us. People who are gentle, who hunger and thirst for what's right, who work for peace and so on. Jesus was that kind of person in his time on earth. His compassion for people rode hand in hand with his passion for justice for the poor and powerless.

Saints copy Jesus, otherwise they're not Saints. They're not perfect either, because they're not Jesus. But within the habits they develop we see how through their best efforts the Lord continues to serve his people. Some reckon Matthew's Beatitudes are a fair portrait of the Lord himself. The repetitive ring in how we deliver them is intended to drive the message home - if you're like any of these, you are blessed by God and will be rewarded.

Jesus describes himself as gentle (Matthew 11:29). Today's Gospel tells us 'the gentle will have the earth for their heritage'. Make no mistake - it's only the gentle that can care for the earth. Others exploit and plunder it. Gentle people can be angry individuals. For them, people matter, they know the value of things. Paradoxically, gentle folk are no pushover, they have Jesus quality. They're blessed. Begin to unpack Jesus' teaching in the Gospel. It's a blueprint for living. Measure yourself alongside it today and see how you get on. Bless you.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

From Pope Francis

PANDEMICS AND OTHER CALAMITIES IN HISTORY

True, a worldwide tragedy like the Covid 19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all. Once more we realised that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. As I said in those days, "the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another".

The world was relentlessly moving towards an economy that, thanks to technological progress, sought to reduce 'human costs', there were those who would have had us believe that freedom of the market was sufficient to keep everything secure. Yet the brutal and unforeseen blow of this uncontrolled pandemic forced us to recover our concern for human beings, for everyone, rather than for the benefit of a few. Today we can recognise that 'we fed ourselves on dreams of splendour and grandeur, and ended up consuming distraction, insularity and solitude. We gorged ourselves on networking, and lost the taste of fraternity. We looked for quick and safe results, only to find ourselves overwhelmed by impatience and anxiety. Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavour of the truly real'.

The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realisation of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organisation of our societies, and, above all, the meaning of our existence.