



SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 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

Twenty Second Sunday of the Year (B) : Mark 7: 1-8, 14-16, 21-23

Alan has to get up and out of his favourite chair to adjust a picture if it is not hanging straight or if something is not dead centre. He tells me its part of who he is. Things stand out for him that need fixing. Small things usually. He can smile about it.

Very different are some of the people Jesus locks horns with in today's Gospel. They're individuals who deal in details also. The details may not be insignificant but if followed to the detriment of bigger matters then the glaring mismatch becomes unjust.

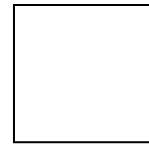
We all need people who read the small print. We often don't. But the details lodged there by way of sub-clauses and disclaimers may make life much more complicated. But the religious casuists and hair-splitters, the nit-pickers who live in their heads and rejoice in pointing out the failures of others, scoring points rather than helping, are the unhealthy individuals whose views Jesus opposed. He doesn't mince words. He calls them hypocrites.

We might find him looking for us to change too. We can stand on the side-lines and delight in two-faced individuals being given a taste of their own medicine, but each of us needs to examine our own track record. Living Jesus' Kingdom outlook is not easy.

When little things become big things, think again. Our own Catholic story is full of wonderful teaching but mixed in with it are mannerisms and devotional add-ons from preachers and teachers, well intentioned but off the point if the direct message of Jesus is less than clear.

Part of the problem may be that Jesus comes to us covered in the fingerprints and words of everyone who has passed him on to us. Love and compassion, forgiveness and mercy must be the benchmarks of all who aspire to follow him. If these are not self-evident in my mindset and behaviour it may help to reflect on how I rely on these very qualities in the Lord. Others, also should be able to rely on finding them in someone acting in the Lord's name - that's us. A regular check against the people skills of Jesus can help keep us on track.

Are we people of the institution or people of the Gospel? There should be no difference but clearly there is. Our forever task is to make the institution of the Church consistently mirror the mind of Jesus. The journey never ends. Who has loved and been understanding and compassionate to you? What did it feel like? We learn like this. Jesus lives in each of us. Share him, starting now.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Pope Francis on a faith outlook

The joy of the Gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anyone or anything (cf. *John 16:22*). The evils of our world - and those of the Church—must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervour. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow. With the eyes of faith, we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that 'where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more'. (*Romans 50:20*). Our faith is challenged to discern how wine can come from water and how wheat can grow in the midst of weeds. Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, we are distressed by the troubles of our age and far from naïve optimism; yet the fact that we are more realistic must not mean that we are any less trusting in the Spirit or less generous. In this sense, we can once again listen to the words of Blessed John XXIII on the memorable day of 11 October 1962: 'At times we have to listen, much to our regret, to the voices of people who, though burning with zeal, lack of sense of discretion and measure. In this modern age they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin We feel that we must disagree with those prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand. In our times, divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by human effort and even beyond all expectations, are directed to the fulfilment of God's superior and inscrutable designs, in which everything, even human setbacks, leads to the greater good of the Church.

- *The Joy of the Gospel—para 84*