



SUNDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

23rd Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 18: 15-20

We were introduced to Chas, a friend of a friend. The evening was OK until someone made an unkind remark about a bloke Chas knew and he went quiet.

Have you said that to his face? came the question. There wasn't a flicker of anger in Chas' face but his gaze was steady. An interesting conversation set off at a galloping pace. We were all ready to hold our hands up and admit to criticising others when they couldn't defend themselves.

Jesus has a challenging way of regarding not just your dignity and mine but that of characters I dislike or with whom I can't agree. Social media at best is wonderful but can be and often is used to publish dreadful opinions of others. In acts of supreme cowardice the authors of damaging criticism and worse can hide behind anonymity and destroy reputations forever. We use to call it character assassination.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' teachings are often uncomfortable. Be honest enough when you catch yourself thinking they refer to other individuals rather than yourself. Projecting Jesus' advice onto people other than putting ourselves squarely in the frame is a defensive gambit with sometimes a smirk of self justification. In the cold light of day we know its not on. Having the good grace to talk difference up front with someone is a first requirement. If its important and it gets you nowhere, you might want to approach others for support. Reporting to authority comes that far down the line, rather than it being the first step. In the end you may need to accept being poles apart. After doing all you can, you may have to leave it. Another time might be appropriate or it may be wiser to desist.

It would appear that Jesus was pestered to sort out differences between people. Special pleading still continues in prayers; do we always believe God is on our side? Human relations is the sacred area where our greatest achievements and catastrophic failures and mistakes take place. It's where the powers of love and forgiveness come into their own and make great sense. Notice that our finest efforts are acceptable to the Lord whether we feel we succeed or not.

When Jesus says 'I tell you solemnly', then take note. It's a cue to a serious and memorable statement. He needs you to get this. It's here twice in today's Gospel reading, a reminder he's with us when we're gathered in his name. Stop. Think this through. We're accompanied by Jesus. Praying with others carries his presence. Praying for others is an act of love - as is not speaking ill of people. Only God knows the full story.



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Season of Creation Events at Ushaw

“Let Justice and Peace Flow....”

**Two Ecumenical Events celebrating creation and calling us to
act to save our common home.**

Faith and the Environment

Wednesday 13th September: 10am to 3.30pm

A Day of Reflection, featuring the inspiring film “The Letter”, and including conversation, prayer and practical responses to the urgent call to care for the environment as our common home.

Come and join us for a day celebrating creation and calling us to action to save the environment. We will hear about “Laudato Si’”, Pope Francis’s important letter calling for discussion and dialogue on the environment. We’ll also hear about a range of initiatives – both local and international - to care for the planet which we all depend on.

Tickets: £5, which includes refreshments on arrival, parking and admission to Ushaw.

Lunch can be bought in Welby’s Café, or bring a packed lunch.

Book your ticket at <https://ushaw.org/whats-on-at-ushaw/>, or by phone on 0191 373 8500.

An Ecumenical Prayer Service

Sunday 1st October: 3pm

An ecumenical Prayer Service for the Season of Creation, when we are called on to commit to climate and ecological justice, and to speak out for those most affected by the climate and ecological emergency. The theme for 2023’s Season of Creation is “Let Justice and Peace flow.....”.

The service will be held in St. Cuthbert’s Chapel at Ushaw.

Everyone is welcome to attend. No booking is required.