



SUNDAY 11 JUNE 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

Corpus Christi (A) John 6:51-58

Angela admits to arguing with her kids about junk food. She carefully reads labels on packets and jars, follows up the details behind soundbite headlines raising the dangers of ultra processed foods. She takes pains to promote and live by a healthy diet.

Fighting the advertising power of multinational food companies and takeaway trends wears you down. The increasing Deliveroo business adds to the ease and attraction of well named fast food. A phone call away, a touch on the app, can bring food to your door, the source of the ingredients unknown. It's easy. Some would say risky. Many should be wary.

Angela's nutritionist pal is a great source of information about digestion and general health. A change of diet can be medicine for the function of brain, heart and the various systems of the body, sustaining, correcting and rebuilding the trace elements necessary for life. Chemical intervention, blood transfusions and donor body parts also bring seeming miracle change to the person receiving. What we put into and do to our bodies has so many implications - and we're still learning.

Into the drama of eating and health, Jesus comes and feeds us with himself. What food can do for us gives a tantalizing glimpse into the mystery of eucharistic meals. The Lord's words stretch and challenge our imagination. "My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink". Love has to express itself, gives of itself and unites, doesn't absorb or coerce. The Lord gives himself to us as food and drink. As what we eat and drink routinely every day affects, enables or harms our health and development, so the personal and intimate gift of receiving the body and blood of Jesus holds profound consequences for each of us.

The renowned anthropologist Fr Pierre Teilhard de Chardin shared with the world his wonderful insight, consistent with Church teaching, that we are not human beings with a spiritual life but spiritual beings enjoying a full human existence. The gift of the Eucharist, in Jesus' own words, means that 'he lives in us and we live in him'. The empowering sustenance we receive brings us to the thanksgiving we make in wonder on today's feast.

The early Church was not interested in the intricacies of transubstantiation. They were not curious about how what in detail happened to bread and wine at the consecration of the Mass. But they were really interested in what happened to the people who received the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus, the real food and drink. Brilliant! It blows fast food out of the water. And it reminds us never ever to be casual about receiving at the Lord's table.



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Pope Francis describing the Church

The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals. No one is saved by himself or herself, individually, or by his or her own efforts. God attracts us by taking into account the complex interweaving of personal relationships entailed in the life of a human community. This people which God has chosen and called is the Church. Jesus did not tell the apostles to form an exclusive and elite group. He said "Go and make disciples of all nations" (*Matthew 28:19*). Saint Paul tells us in the people of God, in the Church, "there is neither Jew or Greek ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus". (*Galatians 3:28*). To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of his people!

Being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.

- The Joy of the Gospel - paras 113-114