



# SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER 2021

## DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

### ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

#### 3rd Sunday of Advent (C): Luke 3: 1-8

Most of us don't like unsolicited advice. But if you ask for advice, be prepared to hear uncomfortable truths. John the Baptist's simple clarity tells it like it is - or is meant to be.

This strange prophet with a burning mission doesn't have the time to be subtle. Like all prophets, courage and insight impel what we call his ministry. In John there was no applying himself to a task. What he did was who he was, his person and work well integrated. No distinction between him and his message. His lack of caution, his direct, unadorned sentences and no-nonsense directives won him friends and enemies. In time it brought about a swift and brutal death.

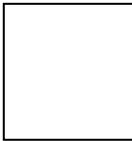
Today's Gospel gives us but few examples of his deceptively simple advice but assures us there was much more. The tantalising sketch of the man described as a voice - a living, walking message, is a challenge to us. We're each required to so internalise God's message to us that we are at one with Jesus, himself described by St John the Gospel writer as The Word - the best expression of the mind of God. Wouldn't it be superb if there were to be no distinction between God's words and ours?

Truth is, our words are a dead giveaway of who we are. We can't help it. Putting on a show, giving ourselves airs and graces or being less than genuine is often seen for the pretence it really is, or for our shallow attempts and aspirations to be seen as better than we are.

The Baptist's life was to prepare individuals for Jesus. You and I share something of the same mission. In the offertory of our Mass we mingle a drop of water with the chalice wine. We pray that as the two liquids become one, we may likewise be immersed in the life of God as completely as Jesus totally shared in our human life. Wow!

One of the great priest anthropologists reminds us that we are not human beings with a spiritual life, but spiritual beings enjoying a full human existence. The difference in emphasis and understanding is vital. It makes the coming of the Lord to us an all consuming reality. John the Baptist was full of this and wants us all to be too.

To consign him to history is a mistake. We'll meet him one day. He'll expect us to have listened to his words and acted upon his witnessing to Jesus' coming - to have changed because of his urgent message. This Advent day is the start of the rest of our lives. Use it well.



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#### Pope Francis speaking of dialogue

Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground, all these things are summed up in the one word 'dialogue'. If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue. There is no need for me to stress the benefits of dialogue. I have only to think of what our world would be like without the patient dialogue of the many generous persons who keep families and communities together. Unlike disagreement and conflict, persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine.

Some people attempt to flee from reality, taking refuge in their own little world, others react to it with destructive violence. Yet between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option, that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations, dialogue among our people, for we are that people, readiness to give and receive, while remaining open to the truth. A country flourishes when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components, popular culture, university culture, youth culture, artistic culture, technological culture, economic culture, family culture and media culture.

Dialogue is often confused with something quite different, the feverish exchange of opinions on social networks, frequently based on media information that is not always reliable. These exchanges are merely parallel monologues. They may attract some attention by their sharp and aggressive tone. But monologues engage no one, and their content is frequently self-serving and contradictory.

- *Fratelli Tutti* 198-200