



SUNDAY 12 MARCH 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

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## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

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### 3rd Sunday of Lent (A): John 4: 5-42

Have you noticed how many people carry a drink around with them now? A coffee in a disposable cup, a bottle of Coke, a personal water bottle or a can of something? Before this trend crossed the Atlantic to be with us - possibly a smart marketing coup - did we go around dehydrated? I think not.

Health issues kick in quickly. Sugar content, fizzy drinks and what appeals to kids, these things warn us to be careful and hint at the quasi - addictive pull created by fashion. Were we any different about tea and coffee in earlier generations? What does the supermarket discounted multi-packs of beer and lager and the increase of cheaper alcohol drinking at home rather than pints at the pub, say about us? Is it thirst? Is it habit? Is it a social question? Do we follow trends whether aware of it or not?

When you've walked a long distance when it's hot and the middle of the afternoon, you need a break - and a drink. Today's Gospel tells of Jesus in just that position. He lived simply, and asked or rather told, his followers to live and travel uncluttered. His disciples have gone to get food. He never feels alone. He is at ease in communion with his Father, and is always ready to create a welcoming space for others whether they're alive to a thirst within them or not. A woman approaches, unsuspecting and unaware of life-changing possibilities driven by her need for water.

The story quickly gathers pace. There was a lot of inherited bad feeling between Jews and Samaritans. Women had little or no status at the time. And here was a Jewish man asking a Samaritan woman who has a bucket for a drink. She's puzzled, perhaps intrigued. A point-scoring conversation starts about religious differences and moves from simple water to a bubbling fountain of life-giving grace, God's gift in Jesus.

Along the way the woman's love life comes to light. Her search for happiness, security and lifelong companionship has left her vulnerable with a history of broken relationships. She is just the kind of person needing to experience the permanent love and compassion of God. When she returns to her village she carries a powerful message: 'Come and see ... I wonder if ...' Her neighbours are taken by her enthusiasm and invite him to spend a couple of days with them. Fascination and wonder have been the prelude to new faith. It can be for every one of us.

Jesus' disciples continue to discover how much their Master is sustained by doing his Father's work. We need to learn the same. There's nourishment in living out "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Jesus knows this is his 'daily bread' - it's his own experience he's sharing in teaching us to pray as he prays. To immerse ourselves in the Lord's Prayer is to accept an invitation to discover a Father of love and compassion who has sent his Son to us. By water and the Holy Spirit we're drawn into the very life of God. Did we ever imagine being thirsty could lead to so much?



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### **Pope Francis talking to and about young people**

We need to make all our institutions better equipped to be more welcoming to young people, since so many have a real sense of being orphaned. Here I am not referring to family problems but to something experienced by boys and girls, young people and adults, parents and children alike. To all these orphans - including perhaps ourselves - communities like a parish or school should offer possibilities for experiencing openness and love, affirmation and growth. Many young people today feel that they have inherited the failed dreams of their parents and grandparents, dreams betrayed by injustice, social violence, selfishness and lack of concern for others. In a word, they feel uprooted. If the young grow up in a world in ashes, it will be hard for them to keep alive the flame of great dreams and projects. If they grow up in a desert devoid of meaning, where will they develop a desire to devote their lives to sowing seeds? The experience of discontinuity, uprootedness and the collapse of fundamental certainties, fostered by today's media culture, creates a deep sense of orphanhood to which we must respond by creating an attractive and fraternal environment where others can live with a sense of purpose.

- ***'Christus Vivit' (Christ is alive). Letter to young people and to the entire people of God. March 25, 2019. Para 216***