



SUNDAY 13 AUGUST 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

19th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 14: 22-33

We tell some stories over and over. We have stories that we'll never forget and memories of events that are triggered when life asks new things of us.

Many times when faced with difficulties, especially big things carrying risk, possible harm, health issues and especially dangers of death - then we pray. People who have no pattern of praying will resort to prayers and stories learnt in school if their back is to the wall and there seems no obvious recourse promising significant change. God is a last resort when all else fails or the unknown threatens.

Today's Gospel story was repeated often by early Christian communities. It bears reading and rehearsing to yourself more than once. The detail is important - we tend to recall only bits.

Jesus is tired. He's been working the crowds. He sends the disciples off in the boat while he manages the hangers-on, the individuals who still want his attention. He also needs some time for himself, time to spend with his Father. He prayed well into the night and we can only guess about his praying. Being at one with his Father doesn't mean 'saying prayers', but enjoying the company and the love of the Fathers' presence and pleasure. As a man he needs to keep his head straight in how he lives out his ministry. We each sort that out prayerfully - or we should.

And then he comes, across the water and the wind to the disciples in the boat. This is why the story is often told and remembered. You can be battling against problems of some kind, and wondering why you committed yourself to this in the first place and there seems no let-up. And the Lord comes walking on the water and you're no longer alone. It's in the danger and the dark that we often can meet him. We must hold on to the story.

Our wonderfully impulsive Simon Peter teaches a big lesson here. Jesus' invitation to come to him - and the invitation is yours and mine too - is a big act of faith, we're not designed for walking on water! When Peter takes his eyes off the Lord he begins to sink. The wind and the waves feel so strong and distracting. We've all been there, buffeted by life's pressures. So sit with the story. It's given to teach us. We're the people of little faith.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on human dignity and labour

The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies. At times, however, they seem to be a mere addendum imported from without in order to fill out a political discourse lacking in perspectives or plans for true and integral development. How many words prove irksome to this system! It is irksome when the question of ethics is raised, when global solidarity is invoked, when the distribution of goods is mentioned, when reference is made to protecting labour and defending the dignity of the powerless, when allusion is made to a God who demands a commitment to justice. At other times these issues are exploited by a rhetoric which cheapens them. Casual indifference in the face of such questions empties our lives and our words of all meaning. Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life: this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all.

We can no longer trust in the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market. Growth in justice requires more than the economic growth, while presupposing such growth; it requires decisions, programmes, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality. I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded.

- The Joy of the Gospel—paras 203-204