



SUNDAY 13 MARCH 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

2nd Sunday of Lent (C) - Luke 9: 28-36

I have not lived in a war zone. I was born in 1946 and raised on stories of bombs falling on Hartlepool during the Second World War. Stories about the Home Guard - Dad's Army, fire-watching through the night to give warning of incendiary bombs so that appropriate services could be marshalled to deal with the consequences and possible casualties. Air-raid shelter stories were plentiful. Tales of amazing heroism and humour accompanied heartbreaking grief and loss. Inventive support and community solidarity brought out the best in people in the worst of times.

The enduring effects today of the Ukraine invasion and the upheaval in the lives of so many innocent people is hard to calculate, but it will be immense. COVID has been bad enough. But it's taking its place alongside this mind-bending new catastrophe which will affect mental health and leave damaging memories and flashbacks for individuals.

The unexpected and the unknown can be disorientating. When we're taken unaware or required to make a speedy and momentous decision, we're out of our comfort zone and into gut feelings. Fear can distort the mind. Clear thinking may go out the window and available help can be a godsend. Understand that we may be on the cusp of life-changing experience.

We can understand the momentous decisions having to be made by millions as consequences of war, famine and devastation in places across the world. I'm unsure if we appreciate the enormity of the changes in the lives of the people who have given us the Gospels and other New Testament writings. As God's presence in Jesus dawned in the minds and hearts of his disciples, they faced radical life moves in order to change their outlook and behaviour. What they experienced they want us to share too.

Today's Gospel story of the Transfiguration - a clumsy word trying to describe visible change - Peter, James and John witnessed something they didn't initially understand but the implications of it became clearer bit by bit later on. Peter's awkward reaction to the experience is replaced by fear when the voice of the Father emphatically asserts who Jesus is - the chosen, totally loved Son of God. The Father could have added 'Get your head around that. And will you just immediately and always please listen to him?'

We think we listen. But Jesus says some tough things. He outlines a way of understanding how love, in God's style, requires a deeper wisdom and giving of ourselves than much of what we tend to do casually. The Gospel requires us to listen with the heart, to notice, to learn, to see and to be called into a new way of living as the early disciples were. It's not easy or comfortable but don't exclude the possibility it can be life-changing.



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Pope Francis on our Conversion

The rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity. Here, I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity. Admittedly, Christians have not always appreciated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us.

The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast. For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive, they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue, it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.

- Laudato Si - paras 216-217