



SUNDAY 14 JUNE 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Feast of Corpus Christi (A), The Body and Blood of Christ

“Mam was a feeder”, Angie said, as we were recalling memories prior to her Mum’s funeral. “You weren’t allowed out the door without being fed and watered even if you were a casual visitor. Her hospitality was brilliant. If all else failed, it was beans on toast or a fried egg sandwich!”

One-word labels bring many pictures to mind. Around here, to be called a feeder is a compliment heavy with welcome. Making a place at table and sharing food puts out a message - you’re at home here, you’re one of us, so have what we’re having. Feeders feed and express love simply because we are fellow runners in the human race. We are dependant on many people. Signals of welcome and support nourish us as profoundly as what’s on our plate. But the food gives us time together.

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus - Corpus Christi, as we used to say. The Gospel passage from St John has Jesus leading us to understand what truly sustains us. Following on from feeding over 5000 people, Jesus takes them and us on a journey from food already familiar to us, into a giving of himself that is more nurturing by far. One of the fourth century Greek Fathers of the Church, St John Chrysostom, once likened Jesus’ giving of himself to us as food and drink, to a mother breastfeeding her baby - feeding and sustaining the child from her own substance. A powerful image.

Reflecting on food, our meals and on fellowship, is important and timely. In an age of fast food, eating on the run, not sitting down together around the table as much as we used to, we can become casual about what we eat, who we eat with and about the Eucharist. The gathering matters. Eating at table with others (without mobile phones please) matters. Jesus spent time with people around tables. He ate, taught, listened, laughed and probably sang at tables.

We celebrate with food. We bring people together with food. It’s not just fuel. Food, cookery and baking programmes abound on TV. New books with stunning pictures flood the market regularly. Don’t miss the message. Don’t ‘Just Eat’. Think this one through, on this Feast above all.

We call the followers of Jesus collectively ‘the Body of Christ’. We use the same language to describe Communion - that’s communion with Jesus and each other. We receive the Body of Christ in order to become the Body of Christ. Being starved of the Eucharist at present may, hopefully, push us to give more time to prayerful thought, to supporting food banks and to how we show love. There’s a famine called loneliness we can do something about. Thanks



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Reopening of churches

Bishop Robert has been sending us information about the reopening of our churches and the arrangements required to ensure the safety of everyone.

The Bishops of England and Wales have been working with the Government to prepare for the gradual reopening of churches for private prayer, and later for public worship. Our Bishop and the Diocese have, for some time, been planning for the reopening of some of our churches taking into account:

- ◆ The safety of parishioners, volunteers, staff and clergy as the highest priority
- ◆ A very small number of churches will be opened first as a pilot. Five churches, one from each area of the Diocese will open as soon as practicable following all necessary risk assessment and health and safety considerations. Then hopefully, after a short trial period others will follow. After consultation, the five pilot churches will be: St Aidan’s, Ashington, St Mary’s Cathedral, Newcastle, St Patrick’s, Consett, St Mary’s, Sunderland and St Joseph’s, Hartlepool.
- ◆ A full risk assessment will be carried out at each church by the Diocese to ensure health and safety
- ◆ The Diocese will provide the necessary equipment for a deep clean of the churches, and for essential regular cleaning
- ◆ Volunteers will be needed for church cleaning, and as stewards to ensure social distancing when the church is open. In many parishes, cleaners and other helpers will, by their age, be unable to assist with this. Hopefully, others will step forward to help.
- ◆ Full compliance with Diocesan health and safety regulations and procedure will be required by clergy, employees and volunteers before a church is opened.
- ◆ No church may open without the permission of the Bishop and detailed guidance is being and will continue to be provided.
- ◆ Clearly it will be sometime before Mass and other services will be given the go ahead and compliance with the fullest requirements will be a matter of course.
- ◆ Please stay safe to avoid the risk of an increase in the spread of the virus.

Thank you for your patience.