



SUNDAY 14 MAY 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

6th Sunday of Easter (A): John 14: 15-21

One of my friends was heartbroken. His wife had died earlier. Spending an hour with him wouldn't be easy, but if friendship means anything, it's what we do.

And I was surprised. Certainly it hurt, but it was revealing. We'd not really shared at this level before. He appreciated people's kindness, their genuine warm words and the inability of those who can't find anything to say - but he was beyond all that. His wife's death had followed months of illness and his selfless caring had been faultless and exhausting. He spoke now with a clarity that rendered me silent, feeling privileged and witnessing something sacred.

You wouldn't describe Frank in the first place as a romantic - more a practical realist, especially when the chips were down or if things were unclear but the stakes were high. And yet he spoke simply about the love he'd known, he'd received, been taught and had given in return. It was very personal and humbling.

There are moments when events or shared experiences take us past words into tears or hugs. There's a closeness that grounds us and binds us in a felt humanity that commits us to support, protect and defend. We're united, simply and totally.

Frank's love for his wife and hers for him brought them near to knowing what each other was thinking, almost able at times to complete each other's sentences. They rejoiced in knowing we're made in the image and likeness of God and were under no illusions that their shared love was a divine gift.

Jesus speaks to us in the Gospel today about the generous madness of God - binding himself to us, taking us into his own life and describing a profound intimacy. The Lord asserts that he is in his Father, that we are in him and he in us. He has just reminded us that the Spirit lives within us. The drama of the Trinity, what our history describes as the dance of God, is happening in you and me.

To not sit and reflect on the wonder and gift of this is crazy. Jesus promises to show himself to us. The more alert we are, the more we'll recognize him in the events, the contacts, the people in our parish communities and those we are sent to serve - and in the Living Word of God, the embrace of our sacraments and in the Breaking of Bread - our Eucharist. We're not short of occasions when he meets us. Rightly, he tells us to stay awake - don't miss what's going on!



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Pope Francis highlighting water availability

A particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by micro-organisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are significant causes of suffering and of infant mortality. Underground water sources in many places are threatened by the pollution produced in certain mining, farming and industrial activities, especially in countries lacking adequate regulation or controls. It is not only a question of industrial waste. Detergents and chemical products, commonly used in many places of the world, continue to pour into our rivers, lakes and seas.

Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet *access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights*. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because *they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity*. This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor. But water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. This shows that the problem of water is partly an educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behaviour within a context of great inequality.

- *Laudato Si paras 29-30*