



SUNDAY 15 AUGUST 2021

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

The Assumption of Our Lady : Luke 1: 39-56

In the calendar for this year, today's feast of The Assumption of Our Lady into heaven means that we miss the Gospel we would have had for the 20th Sunday of the year. It's the final part of St John's chapter on Jesus' teaching of the gift of himself as bread for the life of the world. Pick up a thought about it on the other side of this sheet.

If you watch the TV programme '24 Hours in A & E' I hope you'll have great admiration for the extraordinary work that skilled hospital staff treat as ordinary.

The dignity and help given to each person requiring medical intervention is a testimony to the inestimable value we put on human life. The range and character of the treatments required and given may, and indeed should, spark off many a thought of gratitude about teamwork, dedication and impressive service.

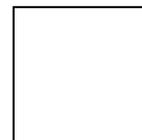
In contrast, we live in a world where neglect, cruelty and exploitation of people show scant regard for the sacredness of every person. Selfishness, power and greed can be dismissive of the rights and dignity of individuals who get in the way of others' desires and plans.

The Feast of The Assumption of Our Lady is the way that we, the community of the followers of Jesus, express our belief in Mary's place in heaven, honouring her unique identity as the Mother of God. It's tempting to emphasise Mary's physical motherhood of Jesus. She brought him into the world, raised and cared for him into his adult years. But it's about more than that.

St Augustine says 'Mary conceived Christ in her mind before she conceived him in her body'. He's describing her being open to the will of God, whatever that may turn out to be. Jesus himself says 'the one who does the will of my Father in heaven is my mother, my sister, my brother' (Matthew 12:46-50). He constantly described his own mission as doing the will of the Father who sent him. With Jesus and Mary we must also do God's will as we understand it to be.

The importance A&E staff give to the human person may lead us into today's feast and a reminder that the dignity that we each have will find its fullest expression in heaven.

Maybe the hard thing to remember is that everyone else has that dignity too. Seek Mary's help with this.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

20th Sunday of the Year (B): John 6: 51-58

The couple sitting at the next table were pretty animated and talking fast. I hadn't a clue what they were saying. I didn't recognise the language. To them these sounds made perfect sense. To me they were beautifully fluent but mystifying. I was mesmerised.

Isn't it wonderful that a series of noises - because that's what words are - somehow by a common acceptance relate to and describe something. Put these noises together in certain sequences and another person understands. We take it for granted, but what an achievement.

Sharing thoughts, making links, forming connections brings people together, creates community and describes difference. Humans, animals and all life has an urge to relate, to protect, defend and survive. There's a theory that primitive language and multiple gestures were developed by the need to hunt, to provide food, to sustain life. Perhaps feeding gave birth to language. Fascinating.

Language has come far. Look at any major dictionary, vocabulary increases all the time. Words are crafted to describe new happenings. St John tells us that 'The Word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1:14) THE Word, the ultimate description, the clearest statement of meaning, is a person - Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God. In him, is summed up more than can be expressed. Indeed 'the world itself could not contain all the books that would have to be written' (John 21:25).

The Word of God - the best and fullest description of who God is and what he's like - defies the limits of our weak words. But this Word feeds like no other. 'I am the living bread, that has come down from heaven to give life to the world (John 6:51). Jesus explodes our limited understanding of food.

The Word becoming flesh describes the stunning fact of God becoming one of his human creatures. Giving his flesh for the life of the world is Jesus' way of telling us that giving his life sustains and nourishes us in ways akin to and beyond bread.

If you're getting lost in grasping this, you're not alone. Many gave up the effort. Simon Peter led those prepared to hang in there. If you're up for agreeing that God is beyond our understanding but beckons us to share his life then come to his table and be fed by him.

I didn't understand the language of the couple at the table next to me, but that doesn't mean it didn't make perfect sense.