



SUNDAY 15 MAY 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

5th Sunday of Easter (C) : John 13: 31-35

"Who are you?" she asked a friend of mine. The question came with a look of admiration and respect and frankly a touch of amazement. The questioner wasn't used to the kindness and thoughtful detail she'd witnessed and received. She suspected my friend had some significance beyond the ordinary. In fact he was simply living a commitment made to the Lord years before. My friend loved people in simple, practical ways. Always pleasant, showing appreciation and treating them with dignity. The questioner perceived it as unusual because it was beyond her ordinary experience.

You may have come across the quotation - "They will not remember what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel". It's a great statement, attributed to Maya Angelou and others. I'll be surprised if you're not nodding in agreement with it. It triggers so many positive thoughts.

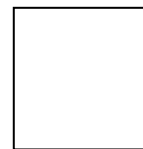
Such a casual, over-used and mis-used word is 'love'. It depends on the context, but at times the word refers to its complete opposite - one individual told me he 'loves' to get his own back on people if he feels slighted. Hardly the love Jesus was talking about! Jesus is reminding us of a way of living positively beyond the ordinary.

Knowing his friends would miss him when he returns to the Father, he'd told them to love one another, but do it as I've shown how it is done. If you do, you'll experience me being with you. The unspoken part of the sentence is 'because Love is who I am'. So what does loving as Jesus loved look like?

Maybe St Paul can kick off the discussion. A person who loves, he says, is patient. Just pause for a bit to see if you agree how essential that is. Then you might continue, all the while checking Paul's criteria against yourself. And a person who loves is kind, he says. Pause. And they're never jealous. Really? Never boastful or conceited, not rude or selfish. You might hesitate when he goes on to say love doesn't take offence and is not resentful.

Let's remind ourselves, Jesus was and is challenging. Paul, I suspect is measuring himself against how he understands the Lord's style of loving. Paul's distilled experience suggests that a loving person takes no pleasure in the sins of others but delights in the truth - surely an attack on gossip at least. But note - he sees in a loving individual someone always ready to excuse. Pause again. To trust. To hope. And to endure whatever comes. These are high ideals. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Love never ends. It's as old as God and as permanent because that's who God is. Without conditions, with no limits, we are held in the gentle grasp of endless love. When Jesus asks his followers to love as he loves us, the world will notice. You bet. It stands out.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis - the Earth and our Faith

Any technical solution which science claims to offer will be powerless to solve the serious problems of our world if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well.

Believers themselves must constantly feel challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions. They need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace.

If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence, we believers should acknowledge that by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures of wisdom which we have been called to protect and preserve. Cultural limitations in different eras often affected the perception of these ethical and spiritual treasures, yet by constantly returning to their sources, religions will be better equipped to respond to today's needs.

The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialisation leads to a certain isolation and the absolutism of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us from confronting environmental problems effectively. An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered. The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that realities are greater than ideas.

- *Laudato Si* paras 200 & 201