



SUNDAY 17 MARCH 2024

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 Lent (B) : John 12: 20-30

We sing and say some dangerous things in church. You might want to stand back and appreciate again the serious things we might be saying out of habit or perhaps not really be taking personally.

Look at a few of many possible examples:

- From the traditional Stations of the Cross: "O Jesus who for love of me, didst bear thy cross to Calvary. In thy sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with thee".
- From the 19th Century famous hymn, Faith of Our Fathers "We will be true to thee till death". "How sweet would be their children's fate, if they, like them (our fathers) could die for thee"
- From a popular hymn: "All that I am, all that I do, all that I'll ever have I offer now to you".
- From an even more popular hymn - I the Lord of sea and sky: "Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart".

Really? The cost of these statements is total. There are heaps more examples if you want to look for them. And there's good reason for these statements - as followers of Jesus we are called to embrace sacrifice, suffering and the Cross on the costly journey of loving others.

In our Gospel passage at Mass today, some Greeks approach Philip with a great request, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus'. They want to meet him, get to know him, establish a relationship and increasingly learn from him by following closely how to love without limit. It requires serious intention, chosen, thoughtful, detailed service. It can't be done without shouldering sacrifice. We aspire to this.

Jesus' response to the Greek request is to assert complete self-giving as a requirement. The hardest things that life demands of us are often the very things that we pray about, asking God to change what we or others are experiencing. We plead for different outcomes, for healing, for some relief from the cost of endurance. We may say, like Jesus, 'Father, save me from this hour. And to this Jesus is clear - 'It is for this reason that, he, you, I, are precisely called to this hour'. There is no Resurrection without the Cross.

The dramatic picture of a grain of wheat dying in order to produce copious new life is a reminder to us. Hence those dangerous statements about dying, about complete giving of self because our sacrifice creates new life. We learn and relearn and redefine over and over what love is, what it requires, what our God is like and the enormity of how much we are cherished as his children. We too would like to see Jesus.

He's all around us and ever present in those who love and keep on loving - and in us when we love too.



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Pope Francis on the unity of all creation

The Judaeo-Christian vision of the cosmos defends the unique and central value of the human being amid the marvellous concert of all God's creatures, but today we see ourselves forced to recognize that human life is incomprehensible and unsustainable without other creatures. For as part of the universe... all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.

This is not a product of our own will; its origin lies elsewhere, in the depths of our being, since God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us stop thinking, then, of human beings as autonomous, omnipotent and limitless, and begin to think of ourselves differently, in a humbler but more fruitful way.

- *Laudate Deum paras 67-68*