



SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER 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

Twenty Ninth Sunday of the Year (B) : Mark 10: 35-45

We got into a canny discussion the other day when the subject of Church language came up. All areas of life have their own jargon, abbreviations and technical terms. It's a kind of shorthand. The Church is no different.

One of the difficulties - and it's true of language generally - is that the same word can mean different things to those using or hearing it. How do you understand the word 'serve'?

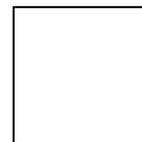
Jesus tells us he has come to serve - a noble and deferential way of honouring the human dignity of another person - and he lived it out in practical love. We're called to copy him. Disciples are students, immersing ourselves in the teaching and the lived-out style of Jesus. There's no substitute for this. The word 'Church' describes the community of those who are doing the learning and putting what we see and understand of serving others into practice. Really? Does this fit with how you see it?

In today's Gospel episode, James and John are seeking status. It mattered hugely in Jesus' time. Their request opened up an opportunity to examine what in God's eyes really cuts the mustard.

Have we grown up with an image of God as a servant? It's not perhaps the first word we'd pull out of our Church's language or experience to describe God, though no description ever seems adequate. St Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:6-8) talks of Jesus emptying himself (what a phrase!) and taking the form of a servant. We have a stunning description of the master sporting an apron and serving the servants (Luke 12:37). In another caution to the Apostles and their status, Jesus is emphatic about himself - 'I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:27).

Serving is our job description, so how do we do it? It's not easy to give or receive help on many a day. To serve in appropriate and non-patronising ways requires lots of listening. Help must be proportionate and relevant. Our initial assumptions, our need to be needed, our prejudices and our haste to solve things can seriously get in the way of genuine service.

Check what's needed. Listen like mad - to what's not being said as well as what is. It's their problem needing help, not mine. Don't assume my previous experience offers ready cooked solutions. Serving, rightly carried out, puts us in the nursery of what Jesus is about. We have heaps to learn, miles to go. It's here we face our poverty as well as our strength. In the act of serving we experience Jesus and we're learning all over again.



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From Pope Francis

For poor countries, the priorities must be to eliminate extreme poverty and to promote the social development of their people. At the same time, they need to acknowledge the scandalous level of consumption in some privileged sectors of their population and to combat corruption more effectively. They are likewise bound to develop less polluting forms of energy production, but to do so they require the help of countries which have experienced great growth at the cost of the ongoing pollution of the planet. Taking advantage of abundant solar energy will require the establishment of mechanisms and subsidies which allow developing countries access to technology transfer, technical assistance and financial resources, but in a way which reflects their concrete situations, since the compatibility of (infrastructures) with the context for which they have been designed is not always adequately assessed. The cost of this would be low, compared to the risks of climate change. In any event, these are primarily ethical decisions, rooted in solidarity between all peoples.

Enforceable international agreements are urgently needed, since local authorities are not always capable of effective intervention. Relations between states must be respectful of each other's sovereignty, but must also lay down mutually agreed means of averting regional disasters which would eventually affect everyone. Global regulatory norms are needed to impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions, for example, when powerful companies dump contaminated waste or offshore polluting industries in other countries.