



SUNDAY 18 AUGUST 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

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 the sound of their words 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.

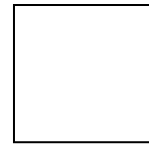
Language has come far. Look at any major dictionary. Vocabulary increases all the time. Words are crafted to describe new happenings. St John tells us that 'The Word' became flesh and lived among us' (John 1:14) THE Word, the ultimate description, the clearest statement of meaning, is a person - Jesus 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 nourishes 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 give 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.



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Pope Francis on passing on our faith

It is true that at times greater emphasis is placed on the outward expressions and traditions of some groups, or on alleged private revelations which would replace all else, than on the impulse of Christian piety. There is a kind of Christianity made up of devotions reflecting an individual and sentimental faith life which does not in fact correspond to authentic 'popular piety'. Some people promote these expressions while not being in the least concerned with the advancement of society or the formation of the laity, and in certain cases they do so in order to obtain economic benefits or some power over others. Nor can we overlook the fact that in recent decades there has been a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young. It is undeniable that many people feel disillusioned and no longer identify with the Catholic tradition. Growing numbers of parents do not bring their children for baptism or teach them how to pray. There is also a certain exodus towards other faith communities. The causes of this breakdown include: a lack of opportunity for dialogue in families, the influence of the communications media, a relativistic subjectivism, unbridled consumerism which feed the market, lack of pastoral care among the poor, the failure of our institutions to be welcoming, and our difficulty in restoring a mystical adherence to the faith in a pluralistic religious landscape.

- **The Joy of the Gospel—para 70**