



SUNDAY 18 FEBRUARY 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

1st Sunday of Lent (B) : Mark 1: 12-15

We were enjoying a couple of pints, putting the world right, being grumpy old men and having a laugh. Long standing friendship and an easy trust between us often led to honest sharing about how we coped with our human limitations. On that day we frankly knew we needed to do more about ourselves. You can wing it only for so long.

Some folks seem to have things together pretty well. Maybe they have. Maybe they only appear to have. Managing being human is a task we all share. Messy days and fleeting fantasies need to give way to facing our limits and habits and getting real. Really real. The inside story of ourselves joins us to a struggling humanity that lives with wet Fridays as well as blissful sunshine.

But God loves us, even when we don't love ourselves. The mind-bending proof comes in sending his beloved Son into human weakness, vulnerability and pain. Identifying with the problem has never been more powerfully expressed. Jesus worked on himself too. We all depended on it. Today's brief Gospel passage has him getting away for a stretch of time into what's graphically called the wilderness in order to prepare humanly for his mission.

Facing up to what does and doesn't work requires thought - lots of it. Reflecting on who we are and can be is essential. For us it can be a slow dance with grace. Jesus' call for repentance means acknowledging our faults, seeking acceptance nonetheless and always starting again, hoping we advance incrementally through constant prayerful effort.

Responding to life's unfolding story is often untidy. We can choose our own times of reflection as Jesus did. It's Lent. It can be a gentle time of sitting with Jesus and his stories and teaching, to reconsider how we reach out to grasp the gift of life and share it with others. We've all benefited from many who've done that for us. How we go about it is personal but it calls for new thinking as well as what's worked before.

You're in good company. Across these Lenten weeks we're joined by millions of our sisters and brothers choosing to revisit how we live with our God of love. Lent is not an assault course, but it can be an honest attempt to recognise the part that the Cross plays in our lives. We have some six weeks before the events of Holy Week. Using the time well is important - others may depend on how well we live through these days. Understanding more about Jesus is a requirement. It comes from talking to him and being quiet enough to listen. He knows what it's like.



DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis talking good sense about climate change

I consider it essential to insist to seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem which comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system. It is true that efforts at adaptation are needed in the face of evils that are irreversible in the short term. Also some interventions and technological advances that make it possible to absorb or capture gas emissions have proved promising. Nonetheless, we risk remaining trapped in the mindset of pasting and papering over cracks, while beneath the surface there is a continuing deterioration to which we continue to contribute. To suppose that all problems in the future will be able to be solved by new technical interventions is a form of homicidal pragmatism, like pushing a snowball down a hill.

Once and for all, let us put an end to the irresponsible derision that would present this issue as something purely ecological, 'green', romantic, frequently subject to ridicule by economic interests. Let us finally admit that it is a human and social problem on any number of levels. For this reason, it calls for involvement on the part of all. In Conferences on the climate, the actions of groups negatively portrayed as 'radicalised' tend to attract attention. But in reality they are filling a space left empty by society as a whole, which ought to exercise a healthy 'pressure', since every family ought to realise that the future of their children is at stake.

Laudate Deum paras 57-58