



SUNDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

7th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 5: 38-48

Matt was adamant. He admired holiness. He thought it was a very earthy quality.

He'd seen how tough it is. Watched its quiet defiance of callous, powerful people despite cruel consequences, seen how it stood up for the weak and the vulnerable and shone with tenderness. So he wrote a Gospel about it. About Jesus. Holiness on legs. It comes from a different place because God does. Our Scriptures tell us today to 'Be holy, as I the Lord your God am holy'. (1st reading. Leviticus 19:2). We each need to try to understand this.

Our task is to copy Jesus. To learn from and be unsettled and challenged by his teaching. Turning the other cheek, giving beyond the call of duty, going the extra mile - that's holiness. It's not in the first place about going to church - except going to church keeps Jesus' words before us and requires that we think - a lot. It's what is meant by loving God with our whole mind. And we need to be fed by him.

Holiness is hard graft. It's practical action in so far as I'm able. Loving my neighbour means dropping what I'm doing when they need a hand - often at inconvenient times. It's awkward, brings me up against what I think is fair or not, makes me face my annoyance to have to alter my plans - even important ones.

Jesus requires we love our enemies. I did used to think I hadn't any. Then I think of those we'll all point out - exploiters, fraudsters, abusers, and those who wreck families, communities, in corridors of power and war zones. I put up both hands. I can't say I love them. But God does. Being holy as he is holy pretty well shatters my complacency and it's meant to. Seeing the face of Jesus in people? I have to admit that it seems to be buried very deep sometimes.

Just occasionally I wish some parts of our Scriptures hadn't been written. But cherishing the whole lot is more than a lifetime's work - and I do see inspirational people coping with stuff I don't think I could equal or even know where to start. They're everyday saints who remind me that Matt - or Matthew to give him his Sunday name, is right. Holiness is an earthy quality. It's feet on the ground, gritty stuff. It's the face of God. So when I pray 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', I swallow hard and do my best to mean what I say. Others depend on it.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on political responsibility

World politics needs to make the effective elimination of hunger one of its foremost and imperative goals. Indeed when financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, millions of people suffer and die from hunger. At the same time, tons of food are thrown away. This constitutes a genuine scandal. Hunger is criminal; food is an inalienable right. Often, as we carry on our semantic or ideological disputes, we allow our brothers and sisters to die of hunger and thirst, without shelter or access to health care. Alongside these basic needs that remain unmet, trafficking in persons represents another source of shame for humanity, one that international politics, moving beyond fine speeches and good intentions, must no longer tolerate. These things are essential; they can no longer be deferred.

Political charity is also expressed in a spirit of openness to everyone. Government leaders should be the first to make the sacrifices that foster encounter and to seek convergence on at least some issues. They should be ready to listen to other points of view and to make room for everyone. Through sacrifice and patience, they can help to create a beautiful reality in which everyone has a place. Here, economic negotiations do not work. Something else is required: an exchange of gifts for the common good. It may seem naïve and utopian, yet we cannot renounce this lofty aim.

◆ *Fratelli tutti paras 189-190*

Becoming St. Patrick – His Slavery

Margaret Lee invites parishioners from the partnership to a presentation by Eric Foster of his debut historical novel on St. Patrick – commencing after the 6:00pm Mass on Sunday 5th March at St. Mary's Church Hall, Burn Lane, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4HT