



SUNDAY 19 JUNE 2022

DDIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Corpus Christi (C) : Luke 9: 11-17

Big Al asks lots of questions. We call him Big because he's tall, broad and has a huge personality. He's also curious and inquisitive and likes to know the far end of things. He has an amazing appetite and can put away an enormous amount of food. He knows a lot about food - reads about it, knows his way round the kitchen, and he finds out from good cooks what works - because he asks questions. I've heard him say, 'Ask plenty of questions, man. You get loads of good information for free!' His active curiosity was quizzing me about what actually happened at the feeding of the 5000.

We like to wonder how in real time a few small loaves and a couple of fish could be turned into enough food to feed thousands and have some bits left over. I can't give Big Al an answer that satisfies - except to say that the detailed logistics can distract us. What's staring us in the face is the humongous abundance of God's care for us all. Don't miss the message - if you give away all you've got, not only are your needs met, but many others benefit from your largess. It's dangerous stuff.

Jesus loved eating with people. Talking over food changed many a mind, deepened and challenged friendships, made table talk the unmistakable language of acceptance and affirmation. Gatherings over food become informal classrooms where relationships are nourished. We hunger and thirst for far more than food and drink. The unspoken menu is about people.

We keep on making the same mistakes. Many of us were brought up with academic niceties, philosophical language attempting to explain what happens to bread and wine at Mass - the vocabulary of transubstantiation. In the early Church they weren't hung up on what happens to the bread and wine at the consecration. What really concerned and interested them was what happens to the people who receive the consecrated bread and wine at Mass. How we then engage with the Lord who feeds us with himself is the personal journey of faith for every each one of us.

Our brilliant teacher is also the lesson itself. He is the gift. The medium is the message. And the message is of loving intimacy as he enters and wants us to assimilate his life into ours. Bread and wine - staple elements of human sustenance across the ages - become the never-ordinary diet through which Jesus comes to heal and strengthen us. Why? Because we're sent to serve in his name, to feed the world, to wash the world's feet and to love one another as he loves us. We need his help. We're doing his work. We learn from his style.

You and I are drawn into the mystery of God's love. A welcome without limit. Our lifelong task? To so learn from this that we might grow in how we love others, to excel in giving them caring signals of acceptance. It never ends.

Big Al's question? Is this feast day is a reminder that we should always remain hungry students?



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Pope Francis on Global Inequality

The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet. Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest. For example, the depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor who cannot buy bottled water, and rises in the sea level mainly affect impoverished coastal populations who have nowhere else to go. The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor, in conflicts sparked by the shortage of resources, and in any number of other problems which are insufficiently represented on global agendas.

It needs to be said that, generally speaking, there is little in the way of clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded. Yet they are the majority of the planet's population, billions of people. These days, they are mentioned in international political and economic discussions, but one often has the impression that their problems are brought up as an afterthought, a question which gets added almost out of duty or in a tangential way, if not treated merely as collateral damage. Indeed, when all is said and done, they frequently remain at the bottom of the pile. This is due partly to the fact that many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. They live and reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the reach of the majority of the world's population. This lack of physical contact and encounter, encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can lead to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality. At times this attitude exists side by side with a 'green' rhetoric. Today, however, we have to realise that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*.

- *Laudato Si* paras 48 and 49