



SUNDAY 2 JULY 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

13th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 10: 37-42

It was overheard in a group, "I wish Jesus hadn't said some things". Tracking the comment, I discovered there'd been some debate and confusion about the first line of today's Gospel passage - 'Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me'.

Taken out of context, words can wreck havoc. This one does. It's been used by various sects and cults to cut individuals off from their families and submit them to literal and unbalanced interpretations of Scripture. Allegiance to cult group think that wards off challenge and elevates commitment without discernment is dangerous. So what's Jesus talking about here?

It sounds simple to put it this way, but there can only be one number one. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment of the law, he doesn't hesitate (check out Matthew 22: 36-40) 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your mind'. That's number one. We also must honour our father and mother and love our neighbour as ourselves. But God comes first.

Notice who Jesus is talking to in today's Gospel passage. He's instructing the Twelve. He is the God who shares our flesh. He carries the torch for broken humanity, the one who takes us on to the Father. We ride on his back. So he's emphatic with those he trains to follow him that parents, brothers and sisters shouldn't hamper the mission he gives them. That mission is passed on to you and me. Get our thinking straight. Correction is part of the direction of travel. Small deviations now can grow into big misses further down the line.

We love our family and friends, of course we do. Be love has a pecking order and our God who is love comes first. Did they have a word for no-brainer in Jesus' time?! He also tells us that rewards abound. Our service is shot through with God's presence. Simple kindness to others is really far from being simple—in the mystery of love it's the disguise God wears.

Jesus is training his followers here, so listen up. Think before acting. Unlearn some inherited habits. Re-visit family favourites and put God first. Remember Jesus also tells us (Matthew 12:50) 'Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, is my brother and sister and mother'. Wow!



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Pope Francis on the common good

There is no end to the building of a country's social peace: rather, it is an open-ended endeavour, a never-ending task that demands the commitment of everyone and challenges us to work tirelessly to build the unity of the nation. Despite obstacles, differences and varying perspectives on the way to achieve peaceful coexistence, this task summons us to persevere in the struggle to promote a 'culture of encounter'. This requires us to place at the centre of all political, social and economic activity the human person, who enjoys the highest dignity, and respect for the common good. May this determination help us flee from the temptation for revenge and the satisfaction of short-term partisan interests. Violent public demonstrations, on one side or the other, do not help in finding solutions. Mainly because, as the Bishops of Columbia have rightly noted, the origins and objectives of civil demonstrations are not always clear; certain forms of political manipulation are present and in some cases they have been exploited for partisan interests.

- Fratelli tutti paras 232