



SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

27th Sunday of the Year (C) : Luke 17: 5-10

I'd never seen Angela angry. She was always tolerant in meetings and gave thoughtful input. Her well considered views were appreciated. Today she was fizzing. Bonuses to bankers and fat cat company directors had seriously got under her skin.

After an honourable and dedicated career as a civil servant she felt no one should need incentives to give of their best. It's what you get paid for and what you deliver, even over the odds. In short bruising remarks she dismantled the bonus machine and eye watering big salaries. Footballers got it in the neck too. She's CAFOD through and through and I'm aware she quietly helps individuals and usually anonymously. She's not rich. Her generosity means she never will be.

I wonder how well we Christians actually follow Jesus. It dawns on me uncomfortably often how penetrating the Lord's teaching is. How, despite incredible compassion, his critique of the officialdom he encountered was so devastating. He didn't and doesn't mince his words. Whited sepulchres and brood of vipers are his labels for hypocritical Pharisees. No time for self-important attention seekers and unjust judges. And the pursuit of riches in an unequal world has danger written large across its face.

Wealth has a purpose and we're entitled to wonder and ask what it's for. Too often success is thought of and not infrequently measured in pounds and dollars. At least one rich young man in the Gospels was shattered when his well-meaning inquiry got an unexpected answer. (Matthew 19: 16-22). The economics of the Kingdom advise emphatically that we share what we have. Goods and talents are to make life possible for one another and not to be banked solely for personal use.

Jesus intends and challenges us to think. To love God with our whole mind, heart and strength means we use our brains. Listening to the Lord requires we metaphorically sit at his feet, meet his gaze and understand across the centuries he's talking to you and me individually. He's deliberately and knowingly teaching us and intends we hear and accept his words. We need to stare at the open pages of the Gospels often and long, daring to allow ourselves with his help to begin the clumsy journey of real change.

But back to Angela. Duty personified. Doesn't expect thanks. Gets on with it. She took seriously both the words *civil* and *servant*. The gaps between rich and poor, north and south, black and white are a serious indictment of our time, perpetuated by individuals, governments and businesses when they fail to care. We're made in the image and likeness of God—all of us. It might seem odd to speak of love in all this. But it's only love that makes it all work honourably. We are commanded to love. Take it on the best authority. It's our duty.



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Pope Francis on Rights without borders

No one can remain excluded because of his or her place of birth, much less because of privileges enjoyed by others who were born in lands of greater opportunity. The limits and borders of individual states cannot stand in the way of this. As it is unacceptable that some have fewer rights by virtue of being women, it is likewise unacceptable that the mere place of one's birth or residence should result in his or her possessing fewer opportunities for a developed and dignified life.

Development must not aim at the amassing of wealth by a few, but must ensure human rights—personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples. The right of some to free enterprise or market freedom cannot supersede the rights of peoples and the dignity of the poor, or, for that matter, respect for the natural environment, for if we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all.

Business activity is essentially a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. God encourages us to develop the talents he gave us, and he has made our universe one of immense potential. In God's plan, each individual is called to promote his or her own development, and this includes finding the best economic and technological means of multiplying goods and increasing wealth. Business abilities, which are a gift from God, should always be clearly directed to the development of others and to eliminating poverty, especially through the creation of diversified work opportunities. The right to private property is always accompanied by the primary and prior principle of the subordination of all private property to the universal destination of the earth's goods, and thus the right of all to their use.

- Fratelli tutti paras 121-123