



SUNDAY 20 AUGUST 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

20th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 15: 21-28

Ted was telling me about how he'd been helped by talking to a patient, good-listening friend. 'I needed to tell the truth about myself and to hear the truth about myself' he said. 'I can't see myself from the outside of myself. Other people can point things out to me that I need to hear'. And that's brave and humbling.

Today's Gospel story breaks new ground. For you, me and for Jesus. The Son of God is Jesus of Nazareth. He's a Jew. Grown up and soaked in Jewish culture, Scriptures and understanding. It's the lens through which he sees the world. His mission is to his people, to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, God's chosen people. And then he meets a feisty pagan woman desperate to find healing for her daughter. She's not going to go away.

Without status in Jewish eyes, she's initially ignored. Even Jesus is silent. But he's caught off guard. This lady pushes boundaries she's claiming shouldn't be there. Her daughter needs help. The desperate mum changes tack. She's addressed Jesus as 'Son of David', a term of respect for a Jew. But when she's on her knees in front of him and calls him 'Lord', the frontiers of his mission are being questioned.

In the rough banter that follows, they're both playing for time, scoring points. This changes Jesus' mind. She's asking for mercy. A young girl and her mother challenge whatever cultural or religious understandings are being played out here. We share a common humanity - the rest is small print.

Jesus never stopped learning. He's not come to do away with the law but to complete it, to widen legalism into compassion. Everything he has learnt from the Father is about love. The verbal jousting with this heroic woman now stops. He knows great faith when he sees it. She goes away happy, her daughter is healed.

We each have to recognise or even find the humility to see differently, to lose arguments, to accept new perspectives. Allowing others to remind us in stark or subtle ways that status, privilege, gender, religion and all else cannot take away our common humanity. We're made in God's image and likeness. Vulnerability makes demands on all of us. Neglect and indifference play no part in the Father's kingdom. Different and needy people have a great capacity to teach. My mate Ted asks that we be good listeners.



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on the Church's
teaching on social questions

The Church's teachings concerning contingent situations are subject to new and further developments and can be open to discussion, yet we cannot help but be concrete - without presuming to enter into details - lest the great social principles remain mere generalities which challenge no one.

There is a need to draw practical conclusions, so that they will have greater impact on the complexities of current situations. The Church's pastors, taking into account the contributions of the different sciences, have the right to offer opinions on all that affects people's lives, since the task of evangelization implies and demands the integral promotion of each human being.

It is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven. We know that God wants his children to be happy in this world too, even though they are called to fulfilment in eternity, for he has created all things 'for our enjoyment' (*1 Timothy 6:17*), the enjoyment of everyone. It follows that Christian conversion demands reviewing especially those areas and aspects of life related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good.

- *The Joy of the Gospel—para 182*