



SUNDAY 21 JANUARY 2024

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

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## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

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### 3rd Sunday of the Year (B): 1: Mark 14-20

How do you write a Gospel? What do you understand you are doing and who are you doing it for? You want to tell people about Jesus. You believe he's news. How do you claim readers' attention?

News may not sell itself. It needs presenting. You want people to keep turning the pages. The way you order your information, attract and keep your readers, the style of writing you adopt, how long and how detailed you want to be, will all determine your success and longevity—or otherwise.

St Mark gives us today's Gospel, the first of the four Gospels to be written. It's short. More about events than Jesus' sayings. It's quite stark, showing how Jesus was not the triumphant, victorious warrior Messiah hoped for by the people, but a humble and suffering figure, put to death by religious leaders but taking us into the glory of the resurrection.

A significant part of Mark's Gospel is given to instructing the group to choose to continue his work. It would be a scoop to interview the individual disciples in the group, but it wasn't to be. Jesus' choice was unusual - he chose four fishermen to start the team. The contrast with their seagoing skills appears strange. Maybe their adaptability and resilience, their coping with the unknown and assumed teamwork skills gave them an edge.

We're Jesus' followers today. We join unlikely others who probably regard us as an equally unlikely choice. Whatever experience or lack of it we bring, there's a requirement to leave previous preferences and attachments behind. Not everyone will understand. Willingness to learn and to change are essential qualities, otherwise the ability to copy Jesus the Master remains unconvincing and will show. Some forget they're followers and who it is they're following. Edited, partial and excusing displays of the Gospel fail to attract. The real thing stands out.

Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John became prominent figures in Jesus' entourage. Their formation was costly, their learning sluggish at times, their self-interest criticized by the Lord. Growing into copies of Jesus, becoming increasingly prayerful and compassionate never stops. The experience of being forgiven for mistakes helps in how our own tolerance develops and how our fractured humanity can breathe acceptance of others - they have feet of clay like our own.

The fascination of Jesus and his message requires repentance - a change of mind, perhaps frequently. Belief in the person of Jesus and the gift of his indwelling Spirit is more than an intellectual exercise. Intentional commitment, hail or shine, to a steep learning curve never lets up. The journey is an adventure, at times feeling like a mystery tour. Maybe fishermen understand the importance of what happens under the surface. Include them among your friends. They're trailblazers for us.



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**Pope Francis on working together**

*Globalisation favours spontaneous cultural interchanges, greater mutual knowledge and processes of integration of peoples, which end up provoking a multilateralism 'from below' and not simply one determined by the elites of power. The demands that rise up from below throughout the world, where activists from very different countries help and support one another, can end up pressuring the sources of power. It is to be hoped that this will happen with respect to the climate crisis. For this reason, I reiterate that unless citizens control political power - national, regional and municipal - it will not be possible to control damage to the environment.*

*Postmodern culture has generated a new sensitivity towards the more vulnerable and less powerful. That is connected with my insistence in the Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti on the primacy of the human person and the defence of his or her dignity under every circumstance. It is another way of encouraging multilateralism for the sake of resolving the real problems of humanity, securing before all else respect for the dignity of persons, in such a way that ethics will prevail over local or contingent interests.*

**- Laudate Deum paras 38-39**