



# SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2021

## DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

### ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

#### **5th Sunday of Lent (B): John 12: 20-30**

“Sir, we should like to see Jesus”. What a smashing request. We’d all ask the same if introductions were as straightforward as they seemed in the Gospel story we hear today. And yet, others could well approach us and seek an introduction to the Jesus we’re expected to know well. An eastern non-Christian once asked me about Jesus. I started to give information but he stopped me. “No”, he said, “Have you met him? What did he say to you?” That’s different knowledge.

It was Greeks who came and asked to see Jesus. What brought them? Does it matter what brought them? God attracts on the simplest pretexts sometimes. I heard of a man who became a priest because as a kid he loved the smell of incense. Daft eh? Mad things can start us on a journey.

We presume the Greek party met Jesus. It’s unlikely he’d turn down the request. But if they were hoping for sweetness and light, for answers others couldn’t give, they would have been startled by what followed.

The Lord indicates the cost of love. If we want something of what he has, this is what it entails. His impending suffering and death are most probably what his inquirers will find difficult to accept or even impossible to understand.

Why do we want to meet Jesus? What are we looking for? Is it something for us, or is it genuinely to be led by him, literally to follow him and to discover in the cost of self-giving that we un-learn some things and re-learn what we thought we already knew. He doesn’t want us to have any illusions about himself - or ourselves either. Going the extra mile, not turning back, things easily said, become the daily cross we are asked to carry.

And yet, he knows and understands our hesitation and reluctance alongside our goodwill. We tend to pray to be relieved of hardship, of the cost of life’s relentless drumbeat. But he reminds us of his mission. He asks, “Shall I say, ‘Father save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’” Following Jesus is an act of courage and trust. Wanting to see him is always granted, but we enter a mystery of loving that never ends and we are never alone. To see Jesus, gaze at the crucifix and find it within you to give thanks.



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#### **What do you believe?**

**SYCAMORE** is an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance in life today. It gives you space to meet other people on Zoom, share ideas, explore beliefs, and think about questions that really matter. Each session involves a short film and plenty of time for discussions. Everyone is welcome.

**WHEN? Six Sundays from 21 February - 28 March 2021, 4 pm to 5.15 pm.**

**What? Welcome and introduction, short film, discussions, feedback**

**How to join? To get the Zoom link please mail [hope@stcharlesrcc.co.uk](mailto:hope@stcharlesrcc.co.uk)**

Hosted by St Charles RCIA team.

#### **Pope Francis speaking**

There is always the ability to do some things simply because they are good in themselves, without concern for personal gain or recompense. Gratuitousness makes it possible for us to welcome the stranger, even though this brings us no immediate tangible benefit. Some countries, though, presume to accept only scientists or investors.

God, on the other hand, lives freely, to the point of helping even those who are unfaithful: he “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good”. We received life freely; we paid nothing for it. Consequently, all of us are able to give without demanding that they treat us well in return. As Jesus told his disciples: “Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give” (*MT 10:8*)

The true worth of the different countries of our world is measured by their ability to think not simply as a country but also as part of the larger human family. This is seen especially in times of crisis. Narrow forms of nationalism are an extreme expression of an inability to grasp the meaning of this gratuitousness. They err in thinking that they can develop on their own, heedless of the ruin of others, that by closing their doors to others they will be better protected. Immigrants are seen as usurpers who have nothing to offer. This leads to the simplistic belief that the poor are dangerous and useless, while the powerful are generous benefactors. Only a social and political culture that readily and ‘gratuitously’ welcomes others will have a future.

- *Fratelli Tutti: paras 139-141*