



SUNDAY 21 MAY 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

7th Sunday of Easter (A): John 17:1-11

You can rely on Harry to turn up. Whatever the occasion you can nearly bet on him coming to show his support and to help out if he can. Some excuse themselves because Harry has the time and they don't. If they knew his story they may think differently.

Harry had a very unhappy upbringing. Gambling had wrecked their family life. House moves, school absences and poor health had robbed him of any self esteem as he drifted into bad company and shoplifting. His home circumstances came to light after he was caught and a very rough and ready youth worker took him under his wing and helped him to see and accept possibilities. This man cared. He'd been there himself. He knew the story and didn't want to see it repeated. Harry responded well and it turned him round. It took time but belief and persistence won out.

The few people who knew Harry's history saw it as a heart warming success story. They were mainly unaware of the failure, the commitment, the disappointments and the hard graft written between the lines. Progress is often untidy. If all you've know collapses eventually, then you'll test the goodwill offered and test it hard. Better for it to crash early than to trust and find its limits later. Self protection is better than rejection again. Being thoroughly objectionable is the way genuineness is questioned. If you want to help, have a tough skin and enduring belief.

Jesus was sent by the Father of all life and love to show us a commitment that even a brutal death could not shift. He believes in us - and continues to believe, despite our waywardness, our good intentions that are short-lived and the obstructive refusal not only to go the extra mile but to budge at all. His love doesn't give in. It's devoid of limits, is radically understanding and re-writes how we think about forgiveness. He carries the cost of all this - and he prays for us. The Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, one of us, carries the torch for humanity and prays to his Father for the rest of us.

Few of us would think our own prayers are anything great or sufficient. The more we sit and value what the Lord has done for us, the more likely our prayer will change. But, here, hold on - Jesus our God prays for us. At the Last Supper he prayed to his Father for his followers - and that includes you and me. And he doesn't stop. He lives forever to intercede for us. It's partly what we mean when we talk of him sitting at the right hand of the Father - he can bend his ear - for us.

He sends his Spirit to mend and complete the ragged prayers we say. Remember, our praying is not a performance. It's the traffic of our relationship with God. Sometimes it's all we can do to turn up - like my pal Harry. It says we're bothered, we make the effort. When Harry does that or when we do, you never know what can happen. We're in the hands of God.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on nature and Sacraments

The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise. The hand that blesses is an instrument of God's love and a reflection of the closeness of Jesus Christ, who came to accompany us on the journey of life. Water poured over the body of a child in Baptism is a sign of new life. Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature. This is especially clear in the spirituality of the Christian East. Beauty, which in the East is one of the best loved names expressing the divine harmony and the model of humanity transfigured, appears everywhere; in the shape of a church, in the sounds, in the colours, in the lights, in the scents.

For Christians, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation. Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Holy Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation.

- *Laudato Si para 235*