



SUNDAY 22 JANUARY 2023

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 (A): Matthew 4: 12-23

It wasn't confession time but we all admitted we were falling short of really sorting ourselves out, of following our best intentions before God. Today's Gospel started the discussion.

Jesus picks up where John the Baptist left off. The message is the same - repent, the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. The kingdom is always close at hand - so close that it's out of focus. But we have a problem with what is always there - we don't notice it after a while. Like wallpaper. When it's new, it's striking. After a bit, we're no longer alert to it.

Repenting means changing. That's why we're sluggish. We settle for what's predictable, reliable and familiar. 'Doing new' means effort. Deliberate and continuous effort. We fight shy of giving ourselves a talking-to, getting specific, and getting stuck in for the long haul. We readily have plenty of ideas about how others should change but just as readily procrastinate about ourselves. We're always going to get round to it. Maybe we had some well-intentioned starts, but they didn't last over long. It's why we need reminders. John the Baptist and Jesus are not talking to themselves.

Trouble is, no change, no progress. Yet we shouldn't get too downhearted. We handle change when there's a crisis, when things can't stay the same we can really shift. If we transfer those abilities to the Gospel's requirements then people will notice something different, even surprising about us.

No need to look far for an example—fisherman became apostles, catching people, not fish. Many at the time would have felt unable to copy them. Not that the apostles were consistent. Jesus told them off when they clearly didn't understand him but wouldn't say so. They argued about who among them was the greatest. They were very human. They too found change difficult. We can't be sure how much they took in before the Spirit hit them at Pentecost.

They had privileged contact with Jesus. But if we want to meet him, we can. Our participation in the Eucharist is a time of profound unity, more than we may ever know. Perhaps the most daring change is to grasp that the first and last place for us to look for him is within our very selves. That's big change.



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### **Pope Francis talking about housing**

Lack of housing is a grave problem in many parts of the world, both in rural areas and in large cities, since state budgets usually cover only a small portion of the demand. Not only the poor, but many other members of society as well, find it difficult to own a home. Having a home has much to do with a sense of personal dignity and the growth of families. This is a major issue for human ecology. In some places, where makeshift shanty towns have sprung up, this will mean developing those neighbourhoods rather than razing or displacing them. When the poor live in unsanitary slums or in dangerous tenements, in cases where it is necessary to relocate them, in order not to heap suffering upon suffering, adequate information needs to be given beforehand, with choices of decent housing offered, and the people directly involved must be part of the process.

At the same time, creativity should be shown in integrating run down neighbourhoods into a welcoming city. How beautiful those cities which overcome paralyzing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favour the recognition of others.

Respect for our dignity as human beings often jars with the chaotic realities that people have to endure in city life. Yet this should not make us overlook the abandonment and neglect also experienced by some rural populations which lack access to essential services and where some workers are reduced to conditions of servitude, without rights or even the hope of a more dignified life.

*- Laudato Si, paras 152 and 154*