



SUNDAY 23 MAY 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

Pentecost Sunday (B) : John 20: 19-23

Alan would tell you he's no good at maths. Technology and scientific stuff generally cause him to struggle. The jargon and in-house lingo of various disciplines and subjects tend to frustrate him.

Some church language doesn't do anything for us. Its use of words like incarnation, redemption or salvation are a form of shorthand for things crying out for fuller treatment. We need people who can put things into words for us that we readily understand. Being full of knowledge doesn't equate with putting over the message in user-friendly ways. So much needs interpreting. Those who've made the message their own through prayerful reflection to make Jesus' teaching personal often do it best.

At Pentecost, God's Spirit gifted the apostles and their hearers with a message that got through to everyone. The Spirit empowered and enabled the apostles to share the Good news - and their multinational hearers to receive and understand it. But that's not all. The Spirit is also part of the revelation. The medium is also the message. God's visiting presence calls for our acceptance. But be warned. There are consequences.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit is not subtle. The sound of a powerful wind filled the house and fire appeared on the heads of the apostles. Both images herald change - destroying what's weak and temporary and bringing to mere mortals the searing love of the Father and the Son. This gift, in Jesus' words, will lead us to the complete truth - to a radical Gospel of love that we learn by watching Jesus, and making our home in his words. In the gifts of the Spirit we have been given, we're urged increasingly to think and do as Jesus did. It's a bold mission. Forget comfortable nostalgia. The Church Jesus needs always requires re-thinking.

Today's Gospel reminds us of our sinfulness. We need forgiving. Our complacency and settled mediocrity hold back the community of Jesus' followers that we call the Church. Pope Francis takes the lead in calling for a field-hospital church that tends the wounded. He reminds us that sharing a common home, we must create a solidarity to heal an exploitative and selfish society and that God's kingdom welcomes everyone.

Our task in understanding, living and bringing the love message of Jesus into all our dealings can never be finished. It's always a work in progress - as you and I are too, out in the wind of the Spirit, the breath of God. Happy birthday, young Church.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Pope Francis on legitimate conflict and forgiveness

In the face of conflicts Christians must often take a position, honestly and decisively.

This does not mean calling for forgiveness when it involves renouncing our own rights, confronting corrupt officials, criminals or those who would debase our dignity. We are called to love everyone, without exception; at the same time, loving an oppressor does not mean allowing him to keep oppressing us, or letting him think that what he does is acceptable. On the contrary, true love for an oppressor means seeking ways to make him cease his oppression, it means stripping him of a power that he does not know how to use, and that diminishes his own humanity and that of others. Forgiveness does not entail allowing oppressors to keep trampling on their own dignity and that of others, or letting criminals continue their wrongdoing.

Those who suffer injustice have to defend strenuously their own rights and those of their family, precisely because they must preserve the dignity that they have received as a loving gift from God. If a criminal has harmed me or a loved one, no one can forbid me from demanding justice and ensuring that this person - or anyone else - will not harm me, or others again. This is entirely just: forgiveness does not forbid it but actually demands it.

The important thing is not to fuel anger, which is unhealthy for our own soul and the soul of our people, or to become obsessed with taking revenge and destroying the other. No one achieves inner peace or returns to a normal life in that way. The truth is that no family, no group of neighbours, no ethnic group, much less a nation, has a future if the force that unites them, brings them together and resolves their differences is vengeance and hatred.

- *Fratelli Tutti* paras 240 and 242