



SUNDAY 24 MARCH 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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### Palm Sunday (B): Mark 14:1-15:47

You have to start somewhere. Many life stories take twists and turns quite unforeseen and unexpected. Things happen along the way that take us off intended paths onto other trails that make new demands. Sometimes, looking back, we may think we see the hand of God, unbeknown to us, guiding us. Perhaps our journeys have steered us to help and show appreciation for others. It's what Jesus did.

Jesus' love of the poor, his opposition to those who inflicted hardship, his welcome for sinners, brought him regularly to the notice of the authorities. It meant that he became a victim, like many he befriended, ending up on the wrong side of people of power. He eats with outcasts and disreputable folks, criminals and untrustworthies whose dysfunctional histories he seems to understand. His friends even let him down - Judas betraying, Peter denying and the rest running away. If you ever felt you're a victim, know that you are understood by the Lord. Ever embraced the truth that you are a sinner? Jesus embraces you. He brings forgiveness and welcome if you dare to accept.

I've met many victims - you'll have met many too. Through no fault of their own, no choices clearly made, they've been dealt a bad hand by others who exploit because they can. It feels radically unfair and it is. Know that helplessness and painful injustice was felt by the crucified Lord.

St Mark's Gospel is stark. Jesus is terrified at the prospect of a brutal death. He calls on his Father to help him but feels the lonely sense of abandonment that many experience - a dreadful let down on top of all else. Finally he gives himself in trust to the Father who loves him beyond death.

Jesus died as he'd lived, sharing the lot of those whose lives or faces didn't fit or who were a thorn in the side of authorities who had power to punish or simply disregard.

The cross is the enduring sign of the price paid in confronting sin. As we carry whatever our crosses turn out to be, we also need to confront whatever is opposed to the reign of God in our world. Jesus was faithful to his Father's will. He remains faithful to us as, despite difficulties, we give ourselves to the struggle to follow him. You have to start somewhere.



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**A word from Pope Francis 'Every little bit helps'**

I ask everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful, because that commitment has to do with our personal dignity and highest values. At the same time, I cannot deny that it is necessary to be honest and recognize that the most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level.

Nonetheless, every little bit helps, and avoiding an increase of a tenth of a degree in the global temperature would already suffice to alleviate some suffering for many people.

Yet what is important is something less quantitative: the need to realise that there are no lasting changes without cultural changes, without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes.

***- Laudate Deum paras 69-70***