



SUNDAY 24 MAY 2020

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

Alice was a born teacher. She loved and lived it and was very skillful. Some months back she was featured in one of those newspaper columns. 'A teacher who changed my life' - named in a glowing tribute from a former student who'd risen to great heights.

I sat with her over a drink the day after she retired. The room was half full of flowers, gifts and cards, all shouting the love and thanks of generations of students, parents and colleagues.

'Humble and exhausted', she said in answer to my asking how she felt. But further down the conversation it was evident that the huge affirmation was important. She knew she'd done a good job, but to have it expressed in so many ways from all quarters confirmed that others knew it too. She accepted their praise and gratitude.

Routinely she would take pains over details. Young and old, everyone mattered. You could be mesmerised watching how carefully she listened to very different individuals. Patience and perception assured them they were accepted and valued while solutions to needs were explored.

Today's Gospel is a watershed. Jesus is at prayer to his Father and is drawing his public work to a close. He's done what was required and given training to others to take over. He prays to his Father for the support they'll need.

We acknowledge and reward people like Alice. She was thanked big time for her work and ministry in education. For Jesus the hour has come to receive the glory that is his from the Father. As Alice was mindful of those who'll succeed her, Jesus prays likewise for those who'll follow him - and that includes us - he says he is glorified in his followers! The time, teaching and care he's given them is intended to ensure his work continues so that people are loved, needs are met, unhealthy attitudes challenged and the best is preserved.

Those succeeding Alice will bring their own style and build on what she has established. Jesus' followers will take his message forward, open to the demands of unforeseen issues requiring prudent direction and action. Thankfully his Spirit is with us because the Gospel is never still. It moves to beckon us onward, translating Jesus' teaching into new applications and shifting cultures. If Jesus is to be glorified in us, if the Father's will is to be done here as it is in heaven, we must renew the face of the earth. Come, Holy Spirit.



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A message from Pope Francis

In virtue of their being baptised, all the members of the People of God, (the Church), have become missionary disciples (*cf. Mt.28:19*). All the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents to spread the Gospel message and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new spreading of the Gospel message calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptised. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in it. Indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus. We no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries', but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples'. So what are we waiting for?

Of course, all of us are called to mature in our work as people who spread the Gospel message. We want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel. In this sense, we ought to let others be constantly teaching us. But this does not mean that we should postpone the mission, rather, each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are. All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfections offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and gives meaning to our lives.

In your heart you know that it is not the same to live without him. What you have come to realise, what has helped you to live and given you hope, is what you also need to communicate to others. Our falling short of perfection should be no excuse. On the contrary, mission is a constant stimulus not to remain mired in mediocrity but to continue growing. The witness of faith that each Christian is called to offer leads us to say with Saint Paul. "Not that I have already obtained this, or am already perfect but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own". (Phil 3: 12-13) (The Joy of the Gospel. Paras 120-121).