



# SUNDAY 25 JULY 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

#### Seventeenth Sunday of the Year (B) John 6: 1-15

Cousin Clare is a good planner. Never one to let others shape her world, it's her hopes and choices that craft much of her future. Thinking ahead is essential to prepare for most things. Laying the groundwork for next month's events means she was up and running weeks ago. We all do it. If we don't, others decide our life.

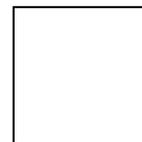
Jesus planned too. His stories are thought out, his actions intended. Today's teachers would spot the tell-tale signs of his lesson plans. Preparing his hearers - and that's us too - to understand new things requires stretching us from what's familiar towards daring insights into a God who is sharing his life with us. A God who wants to get into our heads, into our feelings, into the ways we look out on the world, into the filters we all have for editing what matters or doesn't. Jesus challenges his apostle Philip to think outside the box.

Jesus is a creative communicator, necessary because we can be poor learners. He uses many images and approaches superimposed one on another and another and more, to hopefully chance the likelihood we'll get the message. Even an occasional glimpse on our part, a momentary flash of awareness, is important and may be memorable. Novel approaches from different directions may leave an after-image lodged in the brain.

Watch him. Crowds were impressed by how he cared for sick people. He comes to us now through a different subject - food. Some people are feeders. They delight in making sure we don't go without - it's often a practical expression of love. But don't miss what's going on here. The Master is about to teach a lesson. He's not just feeding people. He's about to re-interpret the whole notion of food.

The Gospels Sunday and for the next four Sundays should challenge our understanding of what feeds us, who feeds us and how are we being fed. We get so used to these stories that they lose their immediacy. They're meant to shock us. We must discover over again how inadequate is our appreciation of God's presence here and how shelf-worn and casual are we in thinking that we've understood. In our Deliveroo and Just Eat world, our take on sustenance needs re-defining and not just by nutritionists.

Jesus fed thousands. The impact was immense. They knew a gift from God when they saw it. They'd think my response very tame. How about yours?



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### ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

#### Pope Francis - speaking about

#### The special place of the poor in God's people

God's heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself 'became poor' (2 *Corinthians* 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the 'yes' uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire. The Saviour was born in a manger, in the midst of animals, like children of poor families, he was presented at the Temple along with two turtledoves, the offering made by those who could not afford a lamb (cf. *Luke* 2:24; *Leviticus* 5:7); he was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own hands to earn his bread. When he began to preach the Kingdom, crowds of the dispossessed followed him, illustrating his words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor' (*Luke* 4:18). He assured those burdened by sorrow and crushed by poverty that God has a special place for them in his heart. 'Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God (*Luke* 6:20), he made himself one of them: 'I was hungry and you gave me food to eat' and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. *Matthew* 25:5ff).

This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. In their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelised by them. The new evangelisation is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.

- *The Joy of the Gospel* - paras 197-198