



SUNDAY 25 JUNE 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

12th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 10: 26-33

My friend knows someone who pretty well scrubs clean the plates before they go in the dishwasher. You'll know the type. You may have met someone like her - you may be a bit the same yourself.

Standards and preferences can be clung to so fiercely that you might ask whether the person has the habit or the habit has the person. Driven people are not so rare.

We understand and laugh at idiosyncrasies. God does too - probably. But Jesus is talking serious stuff in today's Gospel. It's about witnessing to the values of the Kingdom and the sacred worth of every person. Prejudice, inherited bias, personal likes, dislikes and fears abound.

One of our difficulties is that we're good at fooling ourselves. Self knowledge is not easy because we don't stand outside ourselves. Our knowledge is subjective. We filter everything through inadequate self awareness and don't see our faults and bias as we should. We read newspapers and websites that feed us others' selective views and create a worldview that can only ever be partial. We may often read only views that agree with our own.

It would be good if we discussed the Gospel as frequently as we discussed how we feel about what's happening in the world or in national or local politics. Getting a grip on Jesus' teaching is a lifetime's task. Applying it to ourselves and living out the message is a requirement - the Lord doesn't expect us to be armchair Christians.

This Gospel reminds us, if we need it, just what a superb teacher Jesus was and remains. Three times in this short passage he tells us not to be afraid. Three times. Be open, be up front, don't pretend. You will be opposed and persecuted. Don't be afraid. One day all will be revealed.

Jesus opens up about our all powerful Father, the only one really worth fearing. Yet this Father holds us in a love so detailed that he doesn't have to count - he already knows how many hairs sprout from our heads. It's a graphic way of describing intimacy. No need to be frightened of him then.

The message of God's love and forgiveness must be spread and lived. Standing up for justice, recognising and alleviating poverty, confronting greed and exploitation means we'll be criticised, ridiculed and variously attacked. Active Christian values are a threat to those requiring or expecting collusion with their vested interests, personal power or money making.

Jesus warns us of opposition. He met it so his followers will. He assures us he'll stand up for us if we stand up for him. It's no surprise that we're worth more than hundreds of sparrows, but a mature following of Jesus requires an honesty and readiness to learn and to act on what we learn. He might have said, 'Get real'.



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Pope Francis on vulnerable people

Building social friendship does not only call for rapprochement between groups who took different sides at some troubled period of history, but also for a renewed encounter with the most impoverished and vulnerable sectors of society. For peace is not merely absence of war but a tireless commitment - especially on the part of those of us charged with greater responsibility to recognise, protect and concretely restore the dignity, so often overlooked or ignored, of our brothers and sisters, so that they can see themselves as the principal protagonists of the destiny of their nation.

Often, the more vulnerable members of society are the victims of unfair generalisations. If at times the poor and the dispossessed react with attitudes that appear antisocial, we should realise that in many cases these reactions are born of a history of scorn and social exclusion. The Latin American Bishops have observed that only the closeness that makes us friends can enable us to appreciate deeply the values of the poor today, their legitimate desires, and their own manner of living the faith. The option for the poor should lead us to friendship with the poor.

- Fratelli tutti paras 233-4