



SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER 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

29th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 22: 34-40

Sitting in the waiting room area of a Magistrates Court is an eye-opening experience if you've not been there before. Amid the anxious and the troubled people are not a few frequent offenders displaying a bravado that raises questions about their difficult personal histories and the clear need of laws to keep the peace, provide protection and impose sanctions.

Many folks may go through life without much contact with the legal profession. In Jesus' time the law was initially God given and the principles of the Ten Commandments further extrapolated into over six hundred requirements by Israel's scribes and religious leaders. Like many a TV courtroom drama, the professionals could seemingly be preoccupied with winning and losing rather than justice. Where and when that happened, the Son of God spoke out.

The Gospels show us Jesus taking issue with lawyers when they made life burdensome for the poor and when their propensity for winning arguments led them into laying traps to discredit him. Clearly there must have been good scribes and Pharisees, but the intrigues of those who in the end may well have contributed to his death, led to confrontations. They were meant to.

Today's Gospel story continues the saga of recent weeks. The question asked of Jesus is a prelude to further discussion. They were ready to take apart his answers. As always, he puts duty to God and to his people firmly in the frame. No doubt about priority.

We can watch from the public gallery. But the Gospel is Good News. What do we read there? What are the implications for us in 21st century north east? How today do we love the Lord our God all our heart, soul and mind? Our response cannot be minimal. It questions the personal relationship we have with the Lord. Is it casual or regularly heartfelt? Is the contact frequent and regular and what evidence is there to support our answers?

Our words carry our life or they're shallow. Prayer can be short but meaningful. Loving with all our mind requires that we think! Reflecting often on the Lord and on how we love our neighbour as ourselves become tell-tale benchmarks of how and to what degree we take our life with God seriously. When we watch Jesus engaging with scribes and Pharisees, he's engaging with us too.

If you feel you don't come out of this too well, don't despair. Your life to date has a clear bearing on where you are with God and how you got there - like the characters in the Magistrates Court. See how you want to make an honest response today rather than what you can risk getting away with. The Lord is merciful. Be the same.



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Pope Francis

The Social Implications of living and spreading the Gospel

No one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on society and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society. Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of Saint Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta? They themselves would have found this unacceptable. An authentic faith - which is never comfortable or completely personal - always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters.

If indeed "the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics", the Church "cannot and must not remain on the side-lines in the fight for justice". All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church's social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it unites "its own commitment to that made in the social field by other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whether at the level of doctrinal reflection or at the practical level.