



SUNDAY 26 MARCH 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

---

### 5th Sunday of Lent (A): John 9: 1-41

We've probably all met Marthas and Marys. There are many like them – perhaps including ourselves.

Here we have the fussy one, a doer, talkative and speaking her mind, contrasted with the quieter, deeper, reflective sister who's more of an attractive introvert. Maybe they're a good balance together. A tag match pair. Between them they'll miss nothing. They have a serious job – they are caring for their brother.

Did Lazarus have special needs? It's the sisters who seem to own the house – unusual at that time, the men had the ownership. Lazarus never speaks. Jesus used to visit them at Bethany. Who did he go mainly to see? We can speculate. Clearly he loved them all. But the message the sisters sent to him tugs at the heartstrings, 'Lord, the man you love is ill'. It seems he had a special place in his heart for Lazarus.

But of set purpose, Jesus chooses not to go. This is a sensitive one. Love has expectations. Martha and Mary both clearly think that a visit from the Lord would heal their sick brother. Jesus meant so much to him. The decision Jesus makes would hurt and confuse. It appears out of character. The women can't disguise their disappointment. It seems they're somewhere between annoyance and quiet anger, grieving about more than the death of Lazarus. They're wounded by Jesus' delay. It doesn't make sense.

When he arrives they speak their pain. It hurts him too and he gives way to tears. He also asks for a greater trust. He's far from being heartless - there has to be something else going on. Can his arrival and the sight of him kindle a hope even yet that love can make something happen? Their assent to believing beyond death and loss that their friend will not let them down is rewarded by the stunning raising of Lazarus.

When we make requests of the Lord, serious and sensible ones and he doesn't respond, can we learn from Martha and Mary? Perhaps a trust we've not experienced before is being called for. Unlike the raising of Lazarus, it may be ourselves who may need to be unbound and let go free, released from our earthbound way of thinking. God isn't required to adopt our plans. It's never easy. Talk to Martha and Mary.



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

### **Pope Francis on appreciating others**

If we are to share our lives with others and generously give of ourselves, we also have to realize that every person is worthy of our giving. Not for their physical appearance, their abilities, their language, their way of thinking, or for any satisfaction that we might receive, but rather because they are God's handiwork, his creation. God created that person in his image, and he or she reflects something of God's glory. Every human being is the object of God's infinite tenderness, and he himself is present in their lives. Jesus offered his precious blood on the cross for that person. Appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love. Consequently, if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life. It is a wonderful thing to be God's faithful people. We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names!

### ***The Joy of the Gospel para 274***

A Lenten Day of Reflection lead by an Ushaw Team with Canon Bob Spence will be held at Ushaw on Friday 31st March. The day will be based around a prayerful reflection on scripture as part of our Lenten journey, and will include Mass and Stations of the Cross. The day costs £10 (which includes car parking) and will start at 10.15am aiming to finish at 3.15pm. Refreshments will be provided on arrival, and participants will be able to buy lunch in Ushaw's café. To book a place go to <https://ushaw.org.whats-on-at-Ushaw/> or telephone 01913738500