



SUNDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

1st Sunday of Advent (Year A) Matthew 24: 37-44

Chris was a wide awake character - in fact he never seemed to sleep. One of those people who never missed a day's work but who could party most of the night. He survived on little sleep and who knows what else.

I remember chatting with him about the Advent call to 'Stay awake'. He laughed, thought he fitted the bill nicely, but I chose to differ. We agreed that he missed things in his enthusiasm. He wasn't particularly observant. His focus was erratic and often self-serving. He was up for learning more about being an Advent person, trying to have a different understanding about staying awake.

Jesus wants us to be ready, to be on-call, not fixed in unalterable habits that we feel must come first. We looked at characters in the Gospels - Simon of Cyrene, hauled from the festival crowd to carry Jesus' cross, reminds me of many a person having to drop everything because of someone's illness, hospitalisation or accident. There are times when what we must do is obvious but we don't always follow through.

We looked Peter and Andrew, James and John, fishermen working hard in an unpredictable business to feed their families. They gave up a lot—and felt it - we have a grumble from Peter that peeps out from the Gospel pages - "What about us?" he asks Jesus, "We've given up everything to follow you". He might have got ample criticism from his wife, from in-laws and dependents but he'd met someone who took priority and often.

Sometimes we can be so immersed in the nuts and bolts and details of things that we may need to pause, stop and remind ourselves what it's for. We can forget we're here to share in life, love, the liberation of people, learning with them and from them. We pass on not just our knowledge or experience, but because of the needs of the poorest, we pass on the distilled reflection on our experience, challenged by their need to re-assess ours too.

We're part of the mysterious work of God's love for the world. We haven't got it all sewn up. Being and staying awake requires we're always open to an alternative appreciation of the common life we share and the common good that is shaped by human dignity. We can be distracted by the scenery along the way and forget where we're going and who with. We're called into the shifting sands of human care. We're each and all made in God's image and likeness. Our life is a sacred process as is everyone else's. Sleeping on the job is an offence - so Chris and I are trying this Advent to stay awake. Join us.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on A Better Kind of Politics

In recent years, the words 'populism' and 'populist' have invaded the communications media and everyday conversation. As a result, they have lost whatever value they might have had, and have become another source of polarization in an already divided society. Efforts are made to classify entire peoples, groups, societies and governments as 'populist' or not. Nowadays it has become impossible for someone to express a view on any subject without being categorised one way or the other, either to be unfairly discredited or to be praised to the skies.

The attempt to see populism as a key for interpreting social reality is problematic in another way: it disregards the legitimate meaning of the word 'people'. Any effort to remove this concept from common parlance could lead to the elimination of the very notion of democracy as 'government by the people'. If we wish to maintain that society is more than a mere aggregate of individuals, the term 'people' proves necessary. There are social phenomena that create majorities, as well as megatrends and communitarian aspirations. Men and women are capable of coming up with shared goals that transcend their differences and can thus engage in a common endeavour. Then too, it is extremely difficult to carry out a long-term project unless it becomes a collective aspiration. All these factors lie behind our use of the words 'people' and 'popular'. Unless they are taken into account a fundamental aspect of social reality would be overlooked.

- *Fratelli Tutti* paras 156-158