



SUNDAY 28 APRIL 2024

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

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## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

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### 5th Sunday of Easter (B) John 15:1-8

OK, we're fed up with rain. It's been too much, caused havoc to crop yields and new planting, and in our gardens the grass and weeds are flourishing. Daffs are fading, cheap and cheerful dandelions and daisies are claiming territory. Nature's blossoms attempt to deft the winds that limit their life. Wonderful colours jump at us.

The wonders of spring carry an Easter message of new life. Weeds can break concrete, the power of life is so assertive. Controlled and managed, enjoyed and displayed, we'd be cheating ourselves to miss the rippling possibilities of growth and colour. Give Springtime our time. Pause to smell the flowers, be enchanted by the life around us.

Jesus gave us pictures, images to set us thinking. He came to tell us over and over that God shares his life with us. His pictures are about growth and health, enhancing what works and cutting back what doesn't. His hearers knew about pruning vines - they'd done it or seen it. The cutting is delicate - enough to increase life, to yield more. Unattached branches can't survive. Separation is fatal.

We carry the life of God - it runs within us. It's mindbending, crazy and true. We're also fragile - fruit grows on thin branches. Let's mix metaphors and turn to listen to St Paul. He reminds us that "We are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). So we must remain part of the vine. It's our lifeblood, our identity. To do otherwise, to go AWOL, is to shrivel and drop. It doesn't work. A no-brainer.

At this time of the year blossoms are stunning, buds and new green shoots abound, spring and new life is shouting at us. We'd be foolish to miss the message. What we see works because the new growth is connected, fed by life-giving sap. Listen to the Teacher: "Make your home in me as I make mine in you. Whoever remains in me, with me in him/her, bears fruit in plenty. Cut off from me you can do nothing". (John 15:4-5 in today's Gospel).

Far from neglecting the one whose life we're carrying, can we allow ourselves to be pruned by Jesus' words and give glory to the Father by producing much fruit - in fact, it's why we're here.



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**Pope Francis on being watchful**

It is not the task of the Pope to offer a detailed and complete analysis of contemporary reality, but I do exhort all the communities to an ever watchful scrutiny of the signs of the times. This is in fact a grave responsibility, since certain present realities, unless effectively dealt with, are capable of setting off processes of dehumanization which would then be hard to reverse. We need to distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the kingdom from what runs counter to God's plan. This involves not only recognizing and discerning spirits, but also - and this is decisive - choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil. I take for granted the different analyses which other documents of the universal magisterium have offered, as well as those proposed by the regional and national conferences of bishops. In this Exhortation I claim only to consider briefly, and from a pastoral perspective, certain factors which can restrain or weaken the impulse of missionary renewal in the Church, either because they threaten the life and dignity of God's people or because they affect those who are directly involved in the Church's institutions and in her work of evangelization.

- ***The Joy of the Gospel para 51***

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