



SUNDAY 28 JANUARY 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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### 4th Sunday of the Year (B): Mark 1: 21-28

How do we think about authority? Does it require acceptance for us to acknowledge its claim on us?

We'd been talking about this because the Gospel passage today describes Jesus as a person who taught with authority and those present made comparisons with the scribes whose teaching lacked an equal gravity. Authority usually comes with office and status but can be contested. The integrity of those in office may be in question. Their lifestyle needs to be in step with the requirements exacted of the rest of us.

Jesus had a personal authority, evident to those hearing him. He practised what he preached - he was teaching his own self. What you see is what you get. When we don't find that in individuals we meet then trust suffers; the incongruity undermines our allegiance and even our acceptance. Sadly, the lack of truthfulness in national and world politics has damaged the public appreciation of authority. Lies and spin have created generations of sceptics to the detriment of dependability. Jesus stood out. Ordinary folks know the difference.

The same Gospel passage shows Jesus driving out an unclean spirit from a man. His word creates results. A graphic demonstration of a rare authority. Evil is the polar opposite of all that Jesus stands for. His compassion for a distressed man liberates the man from his interfering spirit. The healing sight assures Jesus of high standing among witnesses.

Personal favourite pictures of Jesus will vary in any church congregation. Preachers can never depend on a common agreed view. Inherited artworks haven't always helped. Jesus was the perfect human being - a vibrant, full-blooded, grounded individual, passionate and loving towards people, a living expression of the Love that Jesus called 'Father'. Sometimes 'holy pictures' portray him as a pious-looking, halo-sporting, dreamy individual that do him an injustice. The cumbersome, rarified lingo of many prayers are also frequently unhelpful. Granted, it's hard to depict holiness, but holiness at best is a down-to-earth, integrated humanity.

The living, powerful Jesus resides in each of us, never distant except we make him so. The shock and fascination of his contemporaries should help us to appreciate the quicksilver quality of his presence and attentiveness. God is an insomniac. He never sleeps, but walks the night caring for his needy people. The God who knocks at our door, hoping we'll open to him, seeks our time and interest, to expand our sense of his presence everywhere. We're challenged to express the same integrity Jesus displayed. We're the Body of Christ, an awesome and humbling extension to how we usually express identity.

We are all works in progress. The unfolding of our lives hopefully raises questions for us that through love and our experience of the cross we might mellow to be more like the authoritative and compassionate Lord that our world needs to see. Let's think on these things.



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**Pope Francis on new ways of thinking**

Our world has become so multipolar and at the same time so complex that a different framework for effective cooperation is required. It is not enough to think only of balances of power but also of the need to provide a response to new problems and to react with global mechanisms to the environmental, public health, cultural and social challenges, especially in order to consolidate respect for the most elementary human rights, social rights and the protection of our common home. It is a matter of establishing global and effective rules that can permit 'providing for' this global safeguarding.

All this presupposes the development of a new procedure for decision-making and legitimising those decisions, since the one put in place several decades ago is not sufficient nor does it appear effective. In this framework, there would necessarily be required spaces for conversation, consultation, arbitration, conflict resolution and supervision, and, in the end, a sort of increased 'democratisation' in the global context, so that the various situations can be expressed and included. It is no longer helpful for us to support institutions in order to preserve the rights of the more powerful without caring for those of all.

**- *Laudate Deum paras 43-43***