



SUNDAY 28 MARCH 2021

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Palm Sunday (B): Mark 14:1-15:47

You have to start somewhere. Many life stories take twists and turns quite unforeseen and unexpected. Things happen along the way that take us off intended paths onto other trails that make new demands. Sometimes, looking back, we may think we see the hand of God, unbeknown to us, guiding us. Perhaps our journeys have steered us to help and show appreciation for others. It's what Jesus did.

Jesus' love of the poor, his opposition to those who inflicted hardship, his welcome for sinners, brought him regularly to the notice of the authorities. It meant that he became a victim, like many he befriended, ending up on the wrong side of people of power. He eats with outcasts and disreputable folks, criminals and untrustworthies whose dysfunctional histories he seems to understand. His friends even let him down - Judas betraying, Peter denying and the rest running away. If you ever felt you're a victim, know that you are understood by the Lord. Ever embraced the truth that you are a sinner, Jesus embraces you. He brings forgiveness and welcome if you dare to accept.

I've met many victims - you'll have met many too. Through no fault of their own, no choices clearly made, they've been dealt a bad hand by others who exploit because they can. It feels radically unfair and it is. Know that helplessness and painful injustice was felt by the crucified Lord.

St Mark's Gospel is stark. Jesus is terrified at the prospect of a brutal death. He calls on his Father to help him but feels the lonely sense of abandonment that many experience - a dreadful let down on top of all else. Finally he gives himself in trust to the Father who loves him beyond death.

Jesus died as he'd lived, sharing the lot of those whose lives or faces didn't fit or who were a thorn in the side of authorities who had power to punish or simply disregard.

The cross is the enduring sign of the price paid in confronting sin. As we carry whatever our crosses turn out to be, we also need to confront whatever is opposed to the reign of God in our world. Jesus was faithful to his Father's will. He remains faithful to us as, despite difficulties, we give ourselves to the struggle to follow him. You have to start somewhere.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Pope Francis on Caring for the Earth (Laudato Si paras 200-201)

~~200~~. Any technical solution which science claims to offer will be powerless to solve the serious problems of our world if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well. Believers themselves must constantly feel challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions. They need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace. If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence, we believers should acknowledge that by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures of wisdom which we have been called to protect and preserve. Cultural limitations in different eras often affected the perception of these ethical and spiritual treasures, yet by constantly returning to their sources, religions will be better equipped to respond to today's needs.

~~201~~. The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us from confronting environmental problems effectively. An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered. The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that "realities are greater than ideas".¹⁴³