



SUNDAY 29 AUGUST 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

Twenty Second Sunday of the Year (B) : Mark 7: 1-8, 14-16, 21-23

Alan has to get up and out of his favourite chair to adjust a picture not hanging straight or if something is not dead centre. He tells me its part of who he is. Things stand out that need fixing. Small things usually. He can smile about it.

Very different are some of the people Jesus locks horns with in today's Gospel. They're individuals who deal in details also. The details may not be insignificant but if followed to the detriment of bigger matters then the glaring mismatch becomes unjust.

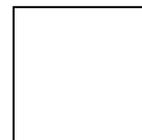
We all need people who read the small print, whose attention to sub-clauses and excusing disclaimers can torpedo what looked like a protective and sometimes expensive precautionary policy. But the casuists and hair-splitters, the nit-pickers who live in their heads and rejoice in pointing out the failures of others, scoring points rather than helping, are the unhealthy individuals whose views Jesus opposed. We might find him looking to us to change too. Jesus doesn't mince words. He calls them hypocrites.

We can stand on the side-lines and delight in two-faced individuals being given a taste of their own medicine, but the control freak in each of us needs to examine our own track record if we're honestly adopting Jesus' Kingdom outlook.

When little things become big things, it's time to step back and think again. Our own Catholic story is full of wonderful teaching but mixed in with it are mannerisms and devotional add-ons from preachers and teachers, well intentioned but off the point if the message of Jesus is overlooked.

Part of the problem may be that Jesus comes to us covered in the fingerprints and words of everyone who has passed him on to us. Love and compassion, forgiveness and mercy must be the benchmark of all who aspire to follow him. If these are not self-evident in my outlook and behaviour it helps to reflect on how I rely on these very qualities in the Lord. Others, rightly, should be able to rely on them too from someone acting in the Lord's name - that's us. A regular comparison between ourselves and the people skills of Jesus can help keep us on track.

Are we people of the institution or people of the Gospel? There should be no difference but clearly there is. Our forever task is to make the institution of the Church consistent with the face of Jesus. The journey never ends. Who has loved and been understanding and compassionate to you? What did it feel like? We learn like this. Jesus lives in each of us. Share him, starting now.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Living Laudato Si': Your Planet and Your Parish

The Guest Speakers for our next Zoom weekend, 3rd-6th September are Bishop Paul Swarbrick and Archbishop Vincent Nichols. The weekend is led by the community at Boarbank Hall in Cumbria and the Ecological Conversion Group.

The weekend will provide a great opportunity for people in our parishes to find out and share ideas about how to be part of an 'ecological conversion' throughout our Diocese, something Pope Francis called us to in *Laudato Si'*. Shared projects are also a great way of getting the parish together and of bringing in young people and people who are not already involved with the Church.

The weekend online is designed so that it can be combined with work and with Sunday Mass commitments, as well as some time out!

For more details, email Sr Margaret Atkins on
margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk