



SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

30th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 22: 34-40

I deeply hope everyone has or will have experienced love. Sadly, we know that that is not the case. Mother Teresa of Calcutta - now a canonised saint, of course - once famously indicated that being starved of love is the greatest hunger in the world.

Many fine things have been said and written about the unconditional love God has for us. If we have never known love ourselves, it is hard to put flesh on those words. The only way we know we are lovable is because we have been given and shown love by at least one person. That person, those individuals who love us carry a profound message from the Lord about our unmeasurable worth.

Jesus speaks to his questioners in today's Gospel that we must love God above all else and love our neighbour as ourselves. It's hard if we don't know how to do love, if we've not known it personally.

Love is who God is. God loves first. Jesus calls God 'Father'. The God who is our Father cannot help but love - he's the origin and source of loving and when we receive genuine love we are sharing in the mystery of God's self-giving to us. When we love our neighbour we signal an understanding of a God who also loves the same neighbour and we imperfectly translate God's love on God's behalf. Wow!

I react against pictures of a soft-looking Jesus. He listened, gave of himself, stood up for people, fought, suffered and died for the people he loved and gave us a command to do likewise. Unfortunately the words that describe love are easily debased, but we can opt for the finest and live out what they try to express. Love has to express itself. It's what it does, it's outward facing.

It helps to remind ourselves each day that we are held in a love that defies description and we cannot stop God loving us. In thanks, we should love one another and express that in serving others' needs. Other people share the same dignity as we do, no matter who they are. It's tough, yes, - it's the business plan of God.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on conflict and fear

War, terrorist attacks, racial or religious persecution, and many other affronts to human dignity are judged differently, depending on how convenient it proves for certain, primarily economic, interests. What is true as long as it is convenient for someone in power stops being true once it becomes inconvenient. These situations of violence, sad to say, have become so common as to constitute a real 'third world war' fought piecemeal.

This should not be surprising, if we realise that we no longer have common horizons that unite us; indeed, the first victim of every war is the human family's innate vocation to brotherhood. As a result, every threatening situation breeds mistrust and leads people to withdraw into their own safety zone. Our world is trapped in a strange contradiction: we believe that we can ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust.

- Fratelli tutti paras 25 and 26