



SUNDAY 3 APRIL 2022  
DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

5th Sunday of Lent (C) - John 8: 1-11

I first met Becky when she was thrown out of her family's home by an aggressive father who felt she had brought shame on the family name. In her teenage years she'd become pregnant to a married man who initially appeared to be very loving - everything her father wasn't.

We were able to give her the care she needed and she's a great mum now and happily married. I sometimes think of her when we read today's Gospel. It's another insight into Jesus' vision of the Kingdom.

He is placed into a cleverly constructed trap when whatever decision he makes he will be criticised and discredited. It's a brilliant story. We must appreciate first of all that he will not countenance anyone being used, being used as bait with no regard for who they are and no respect for their dignity. The woman, like the men in the story, is made in the image and likeness of God. He takes his time to release the girl and himself from the malicious contrived plot set for them by people with no regard for anyone but themselves.

For Jesus, there are sins of weakness and sins of strength. He is superb with this woman - not condemning, showing understanding and respect. Not condoning her sin, but neither diminishing her as a person. Contrast this story with the times Jesus gets angry. It often occurs in his contretemps with the scribes and Pharisees. When they place heavy burdens on people's shoulders and refuse to help them, when they're two faced, full of themselves and use power and position to belittle and dismiss others. He doesn't mince his words - calling them a brood of vipers, whited tombs, OK on the outside but full of dead men's bones and corruption!

In the Kingdom of his Father, sinners are welcomed and forgiven. By his keeping company with many who appeared to live on the wrong side of the law, he demonstrates clearly that they're loved by God who hates the sin but loves the sinner. When we go wrong we're met with compassion and understanding, shown and taught forgiveness. To the harsh world of those who plot and connive for their own ends, he turns the tables and exposes their inhumanity and emptiness.

He spends time often, it seems, with scribes and Pharisees because they're the most lost of all. If they can see where he's coming from, the door to change is wide open.



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Pope Francis here

Our world is being torn apart by wars and violence, and wounded by a widespread individualism which divides human beings, setting them against one another as they pursue their own well-being. In various countries, conflicts and old divisions from the past are re-emerging. I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another. 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another'. (John 13:35). This was Jesus's heartfelt prayer to the Father, 'That they may all be one ... in us ... so that the world may believe'. (John 17:21). Beware of the temptation of jealousy. We are all in the same boat and headed to the same port. Let us ask for the grace to rejoice in the gifts of each, which belong to all.

Those wounded by historical divisions find it difficult to accept our invitation to forgiveness and reconciliation, since they think that we are ignoring their pain or are asking them to give up their memory and ideals. But if they see the witness of authentically fraternal and reconciled communities, they will find that witness luminous and attractive. It always pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts. Whom are we going to evangelise if this is the way we act?

- The Joy of the Gospel - para 99 and 100