



SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER 2023

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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### **1st Sunday of Advent (B): Mark 13: 33-37**

'My grandad was a knocker-upper'. Billy told us recently. Some of the others didn't understand, so he went on to explain.

In some pit villages a person went round workers' houses to tap on bedroom windows with a long pole to wake fellers up to get into the colliery for an early shift. Individuals paid a small sum for this. A slate by their door indicated what time they needed waking. Amazement all round from the folks who'd never heard the like!

Alarm clocks and phones have moved us on. We don't rely on church bells to let us know what time it is, but needing to be awake and alert shouldn't require any justifying - we can't sleepwalk through life. Trance-like habits and tiredness can be dangerous. Being responsive to whatever happens means being wide-awake and sharp.

Jesus makes it a requirement. Routine habits can rob us of what might be happening in the real world around us. If you indulge in a spell of people-watching, it's enlightening to suspect that many of us are flying on instruments and are to a degree inattentive of the world outside of our heads. Falling asleep on the job is not on in anyone's trade, but there are levels of alertness and the Lord is warning about drifting.

He's looking for the signals that we understand he works through us. The story of your life and mine is also the story of what God is doing in our lives - we don't have two lives. The constant challenge to be focussed on the love of God and neighbour is to become a lifelong habit. In the middle of the grisly problems of life and world news, in the whirl of personal, family or work issues, we filter for what God wants as a first option. In a nutshell, to see as Jesus sees is a start. Being awake means we attend to the consequences. It ain't easy.

I'm frequently amazed that God entrusts us, whacky folks sometimes, to be his agents. To wear his face and, at best, to play a part of unknown significance to us at times, in bringing his kingdom presence to others. It's risky by our standards and by his actually. But it's how he chooses to live among us. It's incarnation, if you want the jargon, but it's the daring style of a God who shared our lot and still does, in you and me.

It's tempting to fall asleep when we've had enough or have given over the odds. Can we admit to a level of curiosity that honestly doesn't want to miss anything? There's no knocker-upper these days, so stay awake!



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*Pope Francis on unlimited power*

The current process of environmental decay is a certain way of understanding human life and activity (that) has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us. Deep down, it consists in thinking as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such. As a logical consequence, it then becomes easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology.

In recent years, artificial intelligence and the latest technological innovations start with the notion of a human being with no limits, whose abilities and possibilities can be infinitely expanded thanks to technology. In this way, the technocratic model monstrously feeds upon itself.

The natural resources required by technology, such as lithium, silicon and so many others, are not unlimited, yet the greater problem is the ideology underlying an obsession: to increase human power beyond anything imaginable, before which nonhuman reality is a mere resource at its disposal. Everything that exists ceases to be a gift for which we should be thankful, esteem and cherish, and instead becomes a slave, prey to any whim of the human mind and its capacities.

- *Laudate Deum paras 20-22*