



SUNDAY 3 JANUARY 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

2nd Sunday after Christmas : John 1: 1-18

Ever been blown away by something so stunningly beautiful and mesmerising that it's hard to describe? Much after, you find words to get across elements of the wonder of it, but it still falls short - your face and halting sentences are insufficient.

To say more requires the skills of an inspired poet, hinting and creating multiple images of a mystery not to be solved but received and entered. Such a work of art is the Gospel of today's Mass.

St John, the Gospel writer, was an impressionable young man when he first met Jesus. He followed him because he knew he had to find out more. Fascination and friendship led into a lifetime of reflection and he just had to pass it on to others - to us. Listen to this:

Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes, that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life - this is our subject. That life was made visible; we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete. (1 John 1: 1-4)

It's a message he cannot but share. He wants us all to know what he knows; he delights in bringing Good News, just as we all do.

He can't tell it all because there's too much - and some things defy adequate description anyway, especially about Jesus. The selected events and teaching and John's distilled understanding of what he experienced are what sneak out in the pages of his Gospel. To pull us into the message and to whet our appetites, he gives us an introduction - and that's what we hear at today's Mass. It was probably written last, after the main Gospel had been largely sorted. Like many a good introduction, it's really a summary. It's condensed, it needs teasing out and mulling over and it's brilliant.

The opening words of the first book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis, take us back to the very beginning of all creation. John reminds us in his introduction today that in the beginning was the Word, God's Son, who was made flesh, became one of us. John knew him and wants to tell you and me. We would be daft not to listen. He was there.



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Pope Francis speaking

Those who really wish to give glory to God by their lives, who truly long to grow in holiness, are called to be single-minded and tenacious in their practice of the works of mercy. Saint Teresa of Calcutta clearly realised this, "Yes, I have many human faults and failures ... but God bends down and uses us, you and me, to be his love and his compassion in the world; he bears our sins, our troubles and our faults. He depends on us to love the world and to show how much he loves it. If we are too concerned with ourselves, we will have no time left for others".

When we are obsessed with our own pleasure, we end up being all too concerned about ourselves and our rights, and we feel a desperate need for free time to enjoy ourselves. We will find it hard to feel and show any real concern for those in need, unless we are able to cultivate a certain simplicity of life, resisting the feverish demands of a consumer society, which leaves us impoverished and unsatisfied, anxious to have it all now. Similarly, when we allow ourselves to be caught up in superficial information, instant communication and virtual reality, we can waste precious time and become indifferent to the suffering flesh of our brothers and sisters. Yet even amid this whirlwind of activity, the Gospel continues to resound, offering us the promise of a different life, a healthier and happier life.

- Rejoice and Be Glad: paras 107-8