



SUNDAY 4 APRIL 2021

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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### Easter Sunday (B) : John 20: 1-9

It was shattering. Just imagine someone dear to you, brutally murdered and then his body disappears. The bottom drops out of your world for a second time. Horrible doesn't describe it.

The possibility of resurrection, the Lord who clearly died now being alive again, wasn't a possible explanation of the empty tomb - not at first. Things like that don't happen. The loss of a loved one hurts like mad because they're not coming back. But Jesus did. Raised by the Father, he came to tell his friends that the doors of death have been blown open and they are to tell everyone.

It's still shattering. This re-writes human experience. The apostles are still afraid the authorities will come after them. Taking in the news of the resurrection required the risen Jesus to come among them to help them see he is alive. They're overjoyed. But how does this fit with all they've been brought up to understand - about life, about God, about - well, everything?

Slowly they begin, with the help of God's Spirit, to join up the dots. The messages were trailed and hinted at in their Scriptures, but the leap of imagination and faith to see them can only happen now. The Gospels tell of Jesus talking earlier of resurrection but how were they to understand even the notion? It's foreign to their life experience. Maybe, if we're honest, we may find it difficult to take in too.

We have the knowledge, the information. We know the story well enough to pass it on to others. But how does it sit with you? How do you handle it, deep inside? This is a slow burn, a journey of sitting with the story, being there in the story, feeling it from the inside, seeing it as a participant, not a spectator. We're in a mystery of love. Silence is a requirement.

We can be tempted to fill the void with words. Don't. Let Easter be unfolded throughout our lives as we sit in wonder and let Jesus teach us in the gift of his Spirit. Resist thinking we know the story. We know it partially and in different ways. Head knowledge is essential, yes, but living with an honest admission that we still have more to learn is vital.

Being still, taking time to be quiet with the Lord and his story for company may be a challenge - many find silence difficult - but try it. Light a candle if it helps, play quiet music if you must, but he is the Teacher, we the students and the lessons never end.

May the Risen Lord re-write your life and give you joy.



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### A caution from Pope Francis

Not infrequently, contrary to the promptings of the Spirit, the life of the Church can become a museum piece or the possession of a select few. This can occur when some groups of Christians give excessive importance to certain rules, customs or ways of acting. The Gospel then tends to be reduced and constricted, deprived of its simplicity, allure and savour. This may well be a subtle form of heresy, for it appears to subject the life of grace to certain human structures. It can affect groups, movements and communities, and it explains why so often they begin with an intense life in the Spirit, only to end up fossilized .... or corrupt.

Once we believe that everything depends on human effort as channelled by Church rules and structures, we unconsciously complicate the Gospel and become enslaved to a blueprint that leaves few openings for the working of grace. Saint Thomas Aquinas reminded us that the precepts added to the Gospel by the Church should be imposed with moderation "lest the conduct of the faithful become burdensome", for then our religion would become a form of servitude.

*- Rejoice and Be Glad paras 58-59*