



SUNDAY 4 AUGUST 2024

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

18th Sunday of the year (B) John 6: 24-35

Food is not just fuel. Granted it keeps us alive and we can't manage without it. But we celebrate with it. It can hold memories. Feeding others can be an act of love.

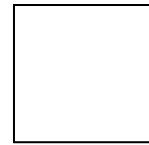
Food helps build communities, brings people together, creates and expresses relationships. Food poverty, inadequate nutrition, hunger, starvation and famine highlight the powerful necessity and symbolism of being fed. We're talking sacred here.

In today's passage from St John's Gospel, Jesus is entering difficult waters - trying to shift the people from free handouts of bread to inviting them to see himself as the gift that satisfies hungers beyond the body's needs. He's still doing that with us. We mustn't think we've got it made or that we have no more to learn. Can I ask you please to read these words again?

Jesus' crowd was overwhelmed at being fed and got the wrong message. Jesus escaped from the enthusiasm that wanted to make him king. He went off into the hills, soaking himself in his Father's presence and joined his disciples by walking on the water. Our Sunday readings miss out this important prayer time. He was preparing to teach the crowds more about himself, the Bread of Life. He would have no illusions about how it would be received.

People were intrigued by Jesus. They'd never met or heard anyone like him and they want to know more. Hopefully we're just the same. Their questions and ours seek to know what must be done. Many of us grew up with a catalogue of rights and wrongs, things to do and not to do. Above all he says, 'You must believe in the one God has sent'. Fascination should lead into finding out more about our 'down to earth God'. We want what he brings. We apprentice ourselves to his lifestyle to become identifiable followers. Our relationship with him, strong or faltering, must shape how we think, spend time deliberately in his company, and report back to him. He's our bread when we're hungry and when we're not. Our strength and direction come from him. We're nurtured and fed by where we put him in our life.

The Lord uses bread as a way into our understanding and imagination. Bread nourishes and sustains us, the staff of life. He taught us to ask Our Father for our daily bread - what gets us from dawn to dusk. But he goes further. Since the Last Supper he feeds us intimately, physically, visually and deeply in our Spirit when we're offered 'The Body of Christ' and we nod or manage to speak a grateful 'Amen'.



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Pope Francis on the community of the Church

The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals. No one is saved by himself or herself, individually, or by his or her own efforts. God attracts us by taking into account the complex interweaving of personal relationships entailed in the life of a human community. This people which God has chosen and called is the Church. Jesus did not tell the apostles to form an exclusive and elite group. He said: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (*Matthew 28:19*). Saint Paul tells us in the people of God, in the Church, "there is neither Jew or Greek..... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (*Galatians 3:28*).

To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of his people!

- *The Joy of the Gospel para 113*