



SUNDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2024

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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### 5th Sunday of the Year (B): Mark 1: 29-39

If you're really good at something, they'll kill you. The world will beat a path to your door, wanting what you have or can do, and you'll be overwhelmed and crushed.

I heard that said many years ago, it can be contested of course, but needs that impel people to travel, bang on doors and in every way explore any possibility of finding solutions will put personal pressure, and worse, on the very individuals with a remedy - their private time is no longer sacred. It happened to Jesus many times. On occasions by the lake he taught from a boat to escape being crushed by the crowd all wanting a piece of him. Apparently in today's world there's good money in being a bodyguard to certain musicians and others at crowded events. Popularity has drawbacks as well as affirmation.

The Gospel we hear today talks of crowds gathering to be healed and to be freed from bad spirits. The description is pretty general. The only particular healing noted is that of Simon Peter's mother-in-law. It's the only mention we have of Simon being married. Maybe or even probably the other apostles were too. It leads to speculation about their wives and children and the effects Jesus had on them, perhaps the time and attention he gave to them.

Despite giving of himself to the crowd round Simon Peter's door and the exhaustion of such work, Jesus is first up the next morning and out to find a quiet place to pray. Time spent in the presence of his Father and the Holy Spirit powers all his work. It's the essential oxygen he needs to keep his head straight. Their love is the model for how he loves the people who claim his time, bend his ear and listen to his inspired teaching. Many saints have taken increasing time to pray as the demands of work and ministry ate into their working hours. Reliance on God is the benchmark of perceptive service. When Jesus sends out labourers to prepare villages for his visits, they expressly are to take nothing with them. They're doing God's work, stripped of clutter and focussed on the people who seek love and recognition.

There is no personality cult being followed here. The dedication is direct and generous. Ours needs to be the same - and also fuelled by prayer. This is important to emphasise. In hectic timetables and workloads prayer can get squeezed out. Quiet time for our relationship with the Lord helps us not to be overwhelmed. To waste time with Jesus is the challenge we make to increasing work. Checking in with him, briefly but frequently, helps our equilibrium and the quality of our service. Feeling driven by multiple demands can damage our health and render us less able to help others when the opposite was intended.

Jesus at prayer must have been impressive. When disciples asked him to teach them how to pray he gave them what we now know as the Lord's prayer. You may want to take time to think carefully through each line of it. It's a book in itself.



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**ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP**

**Pope Francis on the progress and failures of Climate Conferences**

*For several decades now, representatives of more than 190 countries have met periodically to address the issue of climate change.*

*It was also proposed to create a mechanism regarding the loss and damage caused by climate change, which recognizes as those chiefly responsible the richer countries and seeks to compensate for the loss and damage that climate change produces in the more vulnerable countries. It was not yet a matter of financing the 'adaptation' of those countries, but of compensating them for damage already incurred. This question was the subject of important discussions at various COP Conferences.*

*Today we can continue to state that the accords have been poorly implemented, due to lack of suitable mechanisms for oversight, periodic review and penalties in cases of noncompliance. The principles which they proclaimed still await an efficient and flexible means of practical implementation. Also, that international negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility.*

**- *Laudate Deum* paras 44, 46, 52**