



SUNDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

5th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 5: 13-16

I never knew Basher's real name but wondered how he'd got his nickname in the first place. As it was, he was a nice guy, up-front and fearless and he couldn't half talk.

Before moving on to the football scores he shared a colourful opinion of people who delight in bemoaning the state of the world, the cost of living, the weather, their neighbours kids and just about anything else. Basher was a doer. He took initiatives, looked for possibilities when others mumbled about problems. He made things happen. He was great with teenagers in the youth club. I can't say that I ever heard a religious word from him but he would put more than a few of us to shame in his outlook and initiatives. If you were in a fix, he's the kind you'd want by your side.

We're called by Jesus to be givers not takers, to be the light of the world rather than complaining about the darkness, sounding off about who should do what. It takes a lot of energy to stay angry, to refuse to forgive, to choose to be bitter. The world doesn't owe us a living - we need to make it happen, to be creators rather than consumers, aware of our own weaknesses before being a critic of everyone else's. Sitting in judgement isn't our place; we never know the full story.

Salt was used to preserve food. If it didn't it was useless. We're challenged to uphold the dignity of every living being. If we don't we've let people down, ourselves too.

Right now some of our near neighbours have to sit in near darkness, juggling between managing food and switching on a light. The punishing demands made on inadequate resources are a budgeting nightmare. We're invited to shine, to be light. To be relevant at this time, can we be bringers of light, honouring the dignity of others embarrassed and feeling diminished by their inability to provide basics? Our present daily expectations may be a long way from those of individuals and families round the corner. Others have put themselves out for us. How do we enlighten the lives of people without them feeling inferior? You and I and they are made in the image and likeness of God. We share a common humanity. We need to give signals of equality in how we shine and help others to shine also.

If we appreciate and feel Jesus' compliments, we recognise that they also include an invitation and a challenge to be like him. Basher would get stuck in, I can't just stand and watch. None of us can.



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

A word from Pope Francis

For decades, it seemed that the world had learned a lesson from its many wars and disasters, and was slowly moving towards various forms of integration. For example, there was the dream of a united Europe, capable of acknowledging its shared roots and rejoicing in its rich diversity. We think of the firm conviction of the founders of the European Union, who envisioned a future based on the capacity to work together in bridging divisions and in fostering peace and fellowship between all the peoples of the continent. There was also a growing desire for integration in Latin America, and several steps were taken in this direction. In some counties and regions, attempts at reconciliation and rapprochement proved fruitful, while others showed great promise.

Our own days, however, seem to be showing signs of a certain regression. Ancient conflicts thought long buried are breaking out anew, while instances of a myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism are on the rise. In some countries, a concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness and a loss of the social sense under the guise of defending national interests. Once more we are being reminded that each new generation must take up the struggles and attainments of past generations, while setting its sights even higher. This is the path. Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day. It is not possible to settle for what was achieved in the past and to complacently enjoy it, as if we could somehow disregard the fact that many of our brothers and sisters still endure situations that cry out for our attention.

- **Fratelli tutti paras 10 and 11**