



SUNDAY 6 AUGUST 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

The Transfiguration of the Lord: Matthew 17:1-9

It sounds, and is meant to be complimentary, when people I haven't met for ages say, 'You haven't changed a bit'. My reply is always to say 'I dearly hope I've changed, a lot!'

Life changes us. Experience adds to and alters our perspectives and sometimes our values. Every cell in our bodies changes with surprising frequency and no one can run upstairs or sprint for a bus as we once did without thinking. From time to time we're reminded that everyone else is changing too when we somehow expected them to remain comfortably the same. They get older as we do. We may even be slow to recognise them.

In today's Gospel story, three of Jesus' key disciples are witnesses of extraordinary change. The clumsy word 'transfiguration' attempts to describe a change of appearance. But it's powerfully more than that. It's an overwhelming, too-much-to-take-in vision of Jesus' real identity. The Gospel account is short on detail. I want to ask questions. What did you see? How do you describe it? What did you feel like? Why was the voice frightening? Did Jesus talk about it afterwards? Did you ask him about it?

The Scriptures are not in the business of giving us that information. It's not their intention or purpose - but it is ours. We're invited to make things personal. The Scriptures belong to us all. However you think of our totally human Jesus, our completely, always and forever Son of God, he shows us his welcoming humanity and his stunning otherness. The Father's gift to us carries a very clear message - Listen to him. It's an imperative.

We may often be confused. The demands of following Jesus' teaching may stretch our willingness to serve and to love one another as he has loved us. In the Gospel story, Simon Peter wanted to start building tents or shrines. Maybe his impulsiveness was rash. God the Father asks that we all take on the enormity of God having not only come among us but also shares our humanity. You can't get more involved than that. If we really get this, we'll not disagree with the need to listen.

But are we any good at listening? Do we listen but not really hear, or half listen and then want to be doing - like Peter. Listening is a skill. We don't all have perfect hearing but we need to be good at this. So listen up, folks, and know that our God wants to show himself to us.



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on the Church's

teaching on Social questions

No one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society. Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of Saint Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta? They themselves would have found this unacceptable. An authentic faith—which is never comfortable or completely personal - always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.

We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters. If indeed the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics, the Church cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church's social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it unites its own commitment to that made in the social field by other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whether at the level of doctrinal reflection or at the practical level.

- The Joy of the Gospel—para 183