



SUNDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

### **23rd Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 18: 15-20**

Tuesday's group was furious. They were sounding off about the fury of others. Stories and anecdotes tumbled over one another. Aggression seems to follow being hurt, slighted or ignored in many a person's repertoire. When feeling's are running high, things can boil over. Alongside the group's anger was an uneasy streak of fear. The agreed view was that the world is not as safe as it used to be.

It's easy to bemoan violence - we all do. More of it seems to be thrust at us in local and national tabloids and TV news programmes. News editors come off badly in our group. Headlining the darker side of life to sell papers or increase viewing figures was more than a suspicion. TV soaps and film trailers got the same verdict. Serial violence, phenomenal explosions and the effects of technological wizardry appeared to glorify brutality and cheapen life. Did these things promote a specious legitimacy to aggression - if you don't like someone's actions, lash out, take reprisals?

Jewish law limited what you can do - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and not more. Jesus had a different teaching - how about turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, giving to anyone who asks, don't chase away borrowers. To cap it all - wait for it... love your enemies! A pretty safe bet that there was no applause to these teachings. Jesus was reminding us that isn't this what we rely on God to be like? We take our lead from him. We have a long way to go.

Today he tells us how to handle someone who has done something against us. Instead of gossiping and damaging the other's reputation, you go and see him, talk about the issue honestly and see if you can achieve a good outcome. This is a step many don't take; they go public first avoiding the very person they should speak with. The Lord seeks reconciliation.

If the personal approach fails, see if others can help. If that's no good, see if the community can help - this will involve prayer of course. If that approach makes no improvement then it's the drastic step of excluding the person from the community - his values are at odds with those who gather in the name of the Lord who promises to be with the gathering. We must make every effort to be reconcilers. It doesn't require agreement necessarily. Jesus' followers are mediators between heaven and earth. We must let go of much and bind ourselves to heaven's thinking. Heaven is among us when alienated individuals come together.

Jesus breaks down barriers, encourages restoring relationships, tells us he's among us. We're united in him. Coming to understand this is a journey not everyone manages. God draws us to have life to the full. How else can we love enemies? Life is God's gift, to be shared and expanded by the work we do to express the life of God that draws us into unity. Try to understand.



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### **More from Pope Francis**

At a time when we most need a missionary dynamism which will bring salt and light to the world, many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away from their free time. For example, it has become very difficult today to find trained parish catechists willing to persevere in this work for some years. Something similar is also happening with priests who are obsessed with protecting their free time. This is frequently due to the fact that people feel an overbearing need to guard their personal freedom, as though the task of evangelisation was a dangerous poison rather than a joyful response to God's love which summons us to mission and makes us fulfilled and productive. Some resist giving themselves over completely to mission and thus end up in a state of paralysis and acedia.

The problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without a spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable. As a result, work becomes more tiring than necessary, even leading at times to illness. Far from a content and happy tiredness, this is a tense, burdensome, dissatisfying and, in the end, unbearable fatigue.

Some fall into it because they throw themselves into unrealistic projects and are not satisfied simply to do what they reasonably can. Others, because they lack the patience to allow processes to mature; they want everything to fall from heaven. Others, because they are attached to a few projects or vain dreams of success. Others, because they have lost real contact with people and so depersonalise their work that they are more concerned with the road map than with the journey itself. Others are unable to wait; they want to dominate the rhythm of life. Today's obsession with immediate results makes it hard for pastoral workers to tolerate anything that smacks of disagreement, possible failure, criticism, the cross.

**The Joy of the Gospel - paras 81-82**