



SUNDAY 7 AUGUST 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

19th Sunday of the Year (C) : Luke 12: 12-48

‘Be alert - the world needs all the lerts it can get!’ It’s a mad quote on a bookmark some friends gave me after their first trip to America years ago. Being alert is crucial. But it’s tiring and we too easily freewheel a bit.

We like to see results, to see something for our efforts. Expectations drive us onward. We need reasons to keep on striving - it’s so easy to lose momentum. We all know what it’s like to pause, give ourselves a talking to, re-set our focus and get going again. For many that’s a valuable daily practice. It sets the compass for the day ahead.

Losing interest and allowing things to drift can happen at community level too. We may wait for improvement and initiative from others but be shy of getting stuck-in ourselves. It happened to the early Christians. They expected the Second Coming of Jesus in their lifetime and began to flag when it didn’t seem likely. They had to learn to look to the long haul without losing hope or becoming lethargic. They had to get used to God time not theirs and so do we.

Memories of Jesus’ stories came back to them - we still have them - Jesus talking of perseverance, being alert and awake, like conscientious night watchmen, ready to respond to any eventuality. The lovely thing about this is that God believes in us, relies on us to give everyone unmistakable signals that they’re loved. Conscious and deliberate effort are required for this. If we’re preoccupied, if our head is elsewhere, we’ll overlook need, unwittingly disregard individuals and miss opportunities to live out the Gospel of love. God is an insomniac - he’s forever alert and on duty. In contrast we occasionally sleepwalk through relationships. We can rehearse better habits.

Living in God’s word is a steady and prayerful jog through the Scriptures, constant conversation and moments of silence in the Lord’s presence. We’ll have plenty of ups and downs - we’re human and it’s part of life’s journey. We can make prayer drab and boring if we want. Or choose to talk to the Lord as we would to a friend - but let him get a word in edgeways!

Someone asked Pope Francis about how to pray simply. He said ‘Say thank you, say sorry, say please’. From a gifted communicator, that’s a helpful gem. Unlike the early Christians we don’t have a lively expectation of the Second Coming. We’re used to God’s Spirit being with us all the time. Allow the Spirit to pray in us rather than make it hard work. “The Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words” (Romans 8: 26).

We’re not on our own. Being alert, dressed for action and ready to serve is today’s Gospel reminder. Our COVID world needs you.



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Pope Francis talking about conflict

When conflict arises, some people simply look at it and go their way as if nothing happened; they wash their hands of it and get on with their lives. Others embrace it in such a way that they become its prisoners; they lose their bearings, project onto institutions their own confusion and dissatisfaction and thus make unity impossible. But there is also a third way, and it is the best way to deal with conflict. It is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process. ‘Blessed are the peacemakers!’ (Matthew 5:9).

In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity. This requires acknowledging a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict. Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity. This is not to opt for a kind of amalgamation, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides.

- ***The Joy of the Gospel - paras 227-8***