



SUNDAY 7 JANUARY 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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### The Epiphany of the Lord (B): Matthew 2:1-12

One of my pals is chuffed because he knows personally someone given recognition in the New Year's Honours List. Another mate knows someone who turned down a similar invitation—he sees everyone as important and himself no more significant than anyone else. Where do we sit between these two views?

The influence and attention of others has shaped us. Decisions from far and near have affected us. How we respond to life impacts not only ourselves; we also influence others. What is done to us and what we do to any and all is an unfolding drama in the complex story of creation. Ponder on it, if you don't give up early because of the enormity of it all. It may help us be more careful about how our style has a bearing on more than we'll ever know.

King Herod was very much alive to the importance of recognition. The smell of possible rivalry became a threat. Curiosity was replaced by anger and expressed in murder. When others take the limelight we believe is owed to us, we may wish their disappearance - in the nicest way, of course.

Recognition is not the same as acceptance. The wise men's story, their homage and gifts, have claimed a place in our own faith history - here Jesus is shown to the world. Custom shows a long established pattern of bringing presents when leaders visit one another. The value of the gift translates as the level of esteem in which the one visited is held. What the objects signify may be subject to scrutiny and speculation. Kings are given very thoughtful gifts.

In our Gospel story there is recognition of the infant King of the Jews, acceptance by the wise and rejection later by those jealous and threatened by a critique of their self-interested power.

Jesus re-writes for all time what power and authority are for. He shares his God-life with us. His acceptance of our fractured selves sits alongside our acceptance of him, be it wholehearted, inconsistent or missing altogether. A new and permanent Kingdom is preached and demonstrated. A leadership that liberates not enslaves, that serves and honours the poor, the downtrodden and the sinful, a King who sides with the suffering and the exploited is the gift and we the receivers. He is love in action.

The values of his reign must continue to challenge those who exercise power unjustly. We his followers choose not to collude with the self-congratulatory slogans that diminish human dignity, disregard truth and waste our resources. Love carries a different message. It's the only thing that works.



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*Pope Francis on international politics*

Although our own days seem to be showing signs of a certain regression, 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. For there to be solid and lasting advances, I would insist that preference should be given to multilateral agreements between States.

It is not helpful to confuse multilateralism with a world authority concentrated in one person or in an elite with excessive power. When we talk about the possibility of some form of world authority regulated by law, we need not necessarily think of a personal authority. We are speaking above all of more effective world organisations, equipped with the power to provide for the global common good, the elimination of hunger and poverty and the sure defence of fundamental human rights. The issue is that they must be endowed with real authority, in such a way as to 'provide for' the attainment of certain essential goals. In this way, there could come about a multilateralism that is not dependent on changing political conditions or the interests of a certain few, and possesses a stable efficacy.

- *Laudate Deum paras 34-35*