



SUNDAY 7 MARCH 2021

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

3rd Sunday of Lent (B): John 2:13-25

“What’s this for?” What’s going on here? Have we got it right? A good mate is known for asking these kinds of questions. It makes him an awkward so-and-so sometimes, but on another day it helps to re-establish priorities. Popularity is not his ticket. He can identify creeping additions, habits accumulated over time that cause drift from original purposes. He makes us think.

What may start out as a one-off practical benefit or someone chancing their arm, can end up as an enduring habit and be regarded as standard practice as if things had always be done that way. It may not be labelled as a tradition, but can be regarded as such.

In Jesus’ time you had to pay the half-shekel Temple Tax, but Roman or other coins bearing pagan portraits were not allowed. Money-changers, your original bureaux de change people, were on hand in the Temple precinct to change your money into acceptable coinage. Animals to be sold for sacrifice had also by this time moved into the temple court area. Once in, they were going to be difficult to shift. Vested interests and livelihoods were involved in these niche market stalls. Making money often drives new customs.

Jesus decided it had got out of hand. The temple is a house of prayer, not a market. It’s where God dwells among his people. At the coming of the Lord, God is present among his people in the person of his beloved Son - an understanding that was to grow more important as time went by.

St John the Gospel writer makes it plain that it was only after Jesus’ resurrection that the disciples realised the significance of Jesus’ words - he has replaced the temple for believers.

So Jesus creates mayhem. The upheaval and fury that followed certainly made him known no matter whose side you were on. For Jesus this was an intolerable commercialisation of the house of God. The temple is a place for worshipping God. It is there to serve a purpose, to help deepen relationships with the Lord.

Our present Covid restrictions have at times deprived us of our usual access to our churches. Have the limitations of this time driven us to focus more on our relationship with the Lord in prayer? It can be a testing time. My mate would ask “What’s church for?” He’d challenge us to focus more on where we are with God than to bemoan losing our habit of going to church. True to form, he’d get us to think. What would you say to him?



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What do you believe?

SYCAMORE is an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance in life today. It gives you space to meet other people on Zoom, share ideas, explore beliefs, and think about questions that really matter. Each session involves a short film and plenty of time for discussions. Everyone is welcome.

WHEN? Six Sundays from 21 February - 28 March 2021, 4 pm to 5.15 pm.

What? Welcome and introduction, short film, discussions, feedback

How to join? To get the Zoom link please mail hope@stcharlesrcc.co.uk

Hosted by St Charles RCIA team.

Pope Francis on caring for our planet

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.

- Laudato Si, para 202