



SUNDAY 8 MARCH 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

2nd Sunday of Lent (A): Matthew 17: 1-9

Have you ever had the cringing feeling of doing something with spontaneous enthusiasm and it's knocked back as inappropriate? It's hard not to pull a face and wish you were somewhere else, could start again or turn the clock back. You can't. The more important the occasion, the worse it feels.

So imagine Simon Peter in today's amazing Gospel story that comes to us with the clumsy title of the Transfiguration. Jesus shares a vision with Peter, James and John, where his appearance becomes more intensely glorious, and Moses and Elijah are in conversation with him. For these three fishermen it's mind-bending, a privilege beyond words and deeply disorientating. How would **you** feel? How do you cope? What do you do?

Peter's words come out of mesmerised delight, "Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here!" He's right of course. But it's an colossal understatement. And he wants to start erecting tents, doing what he hopes is a grateful response to what he's witnessing. He gets no further. From the shadow of a bright cloud comes a voice from the Father of all life - can you imagine this!? The apostles are plunged into fear, out of their depth, thrown into a bewilderment that could only become a new understanding much later.

I feel sorry for Peter and the others. Taking the story as given, they don't get the message. God the Father is direct. He wants them to stop and think. Effectively he's saying, "Have you the slightest grasp of who this is - he's my Son! Take this in - this is my Son! You have no idea how much I love him, how important he is, now and for all time! So stop and think. You have so much yet to learn. Your job is to listen to him! Take in what he says because of who he is and what he has to show and teach you. Will you, for heaven's sake and for yours, just listen!? And they're terrified. Rightly.

Despite their fascination, admiration, pride at being in Jesus' company, they're being taken to a new place. After that they're silent. Words don't come. Words don't cut it anyway. It's time for deep thinking, complete listening, and being overtaken by God.

So when you act without thinking, read the Scriptures in a surface way, pray or attend Mass without thinking, have you taken in the enormity of what God's gift of Jesus means? We each have new layers of understanding ahead of us. We have homely notions of Jesus to be shattered and rebuilt from scratch because we have become casual. Become a good listener. Talk to Simon Peter.



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The Green Project - is a great way of engaging young people with the issue of climate change and for inspiring and encouraging people to take action. The project by the Springs Dance Company on 17 March includes a moving and thought provoking 10 minute duet performance with introduction. It will be followed by Q&A and a discussion. Workshops for youngsters are also available at Bishop Auckland Methodist Church, 21 Cockton Hill Road, DL14 6EN. Workshops : 4pm for Primary age and 4.45pm for Secondary age. 7 - 9pm adult event includes performance and discussion. For primary and secondary age workshops book your place by calling 01388 603142 or email john.purdy@methodist.org.UK

More from Pope Francis - the Joy of the Gospel

Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community, nor should the doors of the sacrament be closed for simply any reason. This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself "the door"; baptism. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems. Para 47

If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication; not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, "those who cannot repay you". There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, "the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel", and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them. Para 48