



SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 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

### 32nd Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 25: 1-13

What's the daftest most annoying, puzzling or memorable advert on television?

Would you like a change from meerkats, Go Compare, Purple Bricks, Laboratoire Garnier and other messages that punctuate our TV programmes? No matter what your likes or dislikes, become aware how much the ads have imprinted brand names on our minds and familiarised us with their products, their incessant drumbeats intended to attract, convince or simply assure us of their goods 'because we're worth it.'

We need repetition often to help drive home or remind us of matters important and even trivial. Teachers have made it a time-honoured practice. How did you learn your times tables or prayers, songs, poems and hymns?

Jesus spoke often about the Kingdom of God, the mindset modelled by him to show us what it's like in God's world. His stories must have been repeated in different settings and for various audiences and his use of imagery is as varied as our TV ads. Matthew's Gospel gives us parable after parable about the Kingdom and today's Gospel about the wise and foolish virgins is a daft one - intentionally, so that it sticks in our minds. Being sensible means planning properly, rather than being reckless and never ceasing to learn.

The Lord told a similar story about those who build on rock or on sand. The sand builders he calls stupid - and this because they hear the Word of God and don't act on it. The Word doesn't shock, annoy or break into their routines. It doesn't change their thinking or behaving. They fail to learn, to put into practice. Like the foolish virgins in today's parable, they just don't think.

God's kingdom requires thoughtful reflection to keep us on track, to stay focussed, be what the Scriptures describe as wise and taking care not to just drift. We don't sleepwalk into the Kingdom.

The bridegroom coming in the story is Jesus. We expect him to recognise us as his deliberate and careful followers, awake to the demands made on us every day. The Lord comes to us in the needs of those around us and we are to be wise enough to see it and respond. "In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). This takes some doing. Steady, relentless learning so that the world is served in God's name through folks like you and me. Don't be foolish. You know it makes sense.



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

### Pope Francis now

"Today's world is largely a deaf world. .... At times, the frantic pace of the modern world prevents us from listening attentively to what another person is saying. Halfway through, we interrupt him and want to contradict what he had not even finished saying. We must not lose our ability to listen". Saint Francis "heard the voice of God, he heard the voice of the poor, he heard the voice of the infirm and he heard the voice of nature. He made of them a way of life. My desire is that the seed that Saint Francis planted may grow in the hearts of many".

As silence and careful listening disappear, replaced by a frenzy of texting, this basic structure of sage human communication is at risk. A new lifestyle is emerging, where we create only what we want and exclude all that we cannot control or know instantly and superficially. This process, by its intrinsic logic, blocks the kind of serene reflection that could lead us to a shared wisdom.

Together, we can seek the truth in dialogue, in relaxed conversation or in passionate debate. To do so calls for perseverance; it entails moments of silence and suffering, yet it can patiently embrace the broader experience of individuals and peoples. The flood of information at our finger tips does not make for greater wisdom. Wisdom is not born of quick searches on the internet nor is it a mass of unverified data. That is not the way to mature in the encounter with truth. Conversations revolve only around the latest data; they become merely horizontal and cumulative. We fail to keep our attention focussed, to penetrate to the heart of matters, and to recognise what is essential to give meaning to our lives. Freedom thus becomes an illusion that we are peddled, easily confused with the ability to navigate the internet. The process of building fraternity, be it local or universal, can only be undertaken by spirits that are free and open to authentic encounters.

Fratelli Tutti paras 48-50