



SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2024

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Twenty Third Sunday of the Year (B) : Mark 7: 31-37

Rob notices things that many of us might miss. He spots them because he's deaf and visual clues are prime information.

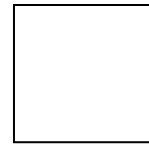
A smile, a grimace is as expressive as a page of words. The power of a gesture can often betray real feelings when the words may be saying something else. Body language is often more immediate. We're a wordy people. If we can decode physical and facial signals we can read people more clearly.

Jesus was a great people watcher. He noticed a man with a withered hand, a widow who put two small coins into a treasury. He remarked that people were meant to see the impressive gear worn by officials, and not to miss those praying at street corners. His concern for the suffering of many must have been matched by his humour at those needing status and applause. Nothing escaped his attention.

He read body language like an open book. So when a man sadly without hearing or speech was brought to him, he spoke clearly by gestures and not in words. His sign language is brilliant. First, he takes the man away from the crowd - he's signalling clearly that the man now has the whole of his attention. Touch is powerful - he puts his fingers into the man's ears. Licking his finger he wets the man's mouth - an odd and daring action. He's giving him speech from his speech. And finally, the look to heaven and a prayer that his hearing and speech be set free. The man knew he was understood, accepted loved and cured.

Jesus' gestures worked for a man where words wouldn't. Thoughtfulness, care and respect required a different language. We are all communicators. We cannot not communicate. Even silence is a message, though perhaps hard to interpret.

As followers of Jesus, note his style and how individual and particular is his engagement with each person - including you and me. Perhaps today's Gospel may prompt or even summon us to examine how clearly or casually we communicate. Whether those receiving our efforts hear and see what we think we're saying or they perceive something else. Our bodies shout messages before our words. The Lord smiles at us. Do we hear what that means?



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Pope Francis on reading the signs of the times

It is not the task of the Pope to offer a detailed and complete analysis of contemporary reality, but I do exhort all the communities to an 'ever watchful scrutiny of the signs of the times'. This is in fact a grave responsibility, since certain present realities, unless effectively dealt with, are capable of setting off processes of dehumanisation which would then be hard to reverse. We need to distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the Kingdom from what runs counter to God's plan. This involves not only recognising and discerning spirits, but also—and this is decisive - choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil. I take for granted the different analysis which other documents of Church teaching, as well as those proposed by the regional and national conferences of bishops. In this Exhortation I claim only to consider briefly, and from a pastoral perspective, certain factors which can restrain or weaken the impulse of missionary renewal in the Church, either because they threaten the life and dignity of God's people or because they affect those who are directly involved in the Church's institutions and in her work of evangelisation.

- *The Joy of the Gospel—para 51*