



SUNDAY 9 APRIL 2023

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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### Easter Sunday 2023: John 20: 1-9

Some years ago I heard from someone at University in Berkley, California, who experienced a significant earthquake. Being a medic, she helped in caring for casualties and did her best to be reassuring. I still remember her comment “When terra firma (the firm ground) is no longer reliable, its scary. Solid ground is not solid anymore. My dependable world felt unsafe”.

With such a disorienting experience comes endless discussion and personal stories shared with mates and many others. What happened, what it felt like and what were the consequences becomes a running conversation with immediate neighbours. Somehow it expresses our shared humanity. It reminds us we’re fragile and not in charge. We need each other.

We celebrate Easter with joy. But resurrection was shattering to those who’d witnessed the brutal crucifixion. Everyone dies—its inescapable. But when the risen Lord appeared to his friends they were frightened. It up-ended their experience, scrambled their thinking and felt spooky. Jesus was careful to reassure them. He knew how his presence challenged their understanding despite the excitement of their knowing he was alive again. They needed a complete re-think. Reality was changed.

Talk about life-changing events? This was re-writing the rules. It was emotionally draining. They surely lost sleep over it—and, of course, talked endlessly about it - others needed to know, like you and me. We’re still talking about it. We must. It’s an ongoing task to absorb what resurrection means. We’re called to the other side of death to share in the glory of God, to know life in its fullness beyond our earthbound limitations. But we’re already gifted with the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead - words easily voiced but needing to be slowly digested. We’re drawn into Jesus’ risen life and it’s happening right now, right here.

Every Sunday is a mini Easter. It’s why our Sabbath is on the day Jesus rose again. It’s also because Resurrection is a continuing journey. We must repeat our grateful thanks weekly and not just once a year at the end of Lent. Driving home the message never ends. Allowing the God living deep within us to be recognizable in our outward behaviour never ends either. Every act of love is an Easter shout no matter how small.

I’ve discovered via Google that in Berkley in the last 24 hours there were two quakes above level 2 on the Richter Scale and 17 below that normally not felt. It’s happening all the time. In the past year Berkley in California experienced 6,636 quakes above magnitude 1. Five above level 4 and one above level 5. The risen life in us could also shake the world daily in multiple minor ways and occasionally dramatically - if we let Resurrection keep us awake too. Happy Easter!



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## **Pope Francis on the dignity of unborn children**

Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this. Frequently, as a way of ridiculing the Church's effort to defend their lives, attempts are made to present her position as ideological, obscurantist and conservative. Yet this defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right. It involves the conviction that a human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development. Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems. Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defense of human rights, which would always be subject to the passing whims of the powers that be. Reason alone is sufficient to recognize the inviolable value of each single human life, but if we also look at the issue from the standpoint of faith, every violation of the personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offence against the creator of the individual.

Precisely because this involves the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person, the Church cannot be expected to change her position on this question. I want to be completely honest in this regard. This is not something subject to alleged reforms or 'modernizations'. It is not 'progressive' to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life. On the other hand, it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations, where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish, especially when the life developing within them is the result of rape or a situation of extreme poverty. Who can remain unmoved before such painful situations?

- *The Joy of the Gospel paras 213 and 214*