



SUNDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2026

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

6th Sunday of the Year (A) - Matthew 5: 17-37

Questions of lying and dishonesty are raised frequently about individuals in the news. Issues of serious, criminal and sexual behaviour are brought before us on a regular basis. Truth, goodness, honesty and decency, hopefully remain the received wisdom that makes certain behaviours newsworthy because they're unacceptable.

Whether standards are upheld or slide, we are all affected. Occasionally the apparent or real frequency of damaging behaviour can blunt sensitivities if 'everyone seems to be getting away with it' and only some are found out.

Today's Gospel at Mass is from the Sermon on the Mount in St Matthew's Gospel. It's the writer's way of gathering some of the memorable sayings of Jesus and giving them to us in the organised form of one sermon. Jesus often took serious issue with the scribes and Pharisees – the legal and scrupulous people who studied and asserted the finer points of law. The Lord called them hypocrites for their attention-seeking and not living by the standards they exacted of others. They accused him of lawbreaking. But he teaches the law of love, and himself as the one who lives and models it as the source of all law, upholding and defending the dignity and respect due to everyone.

He comes to establish God's Kingdom – that we live 'on earth as it is in heaven', that we think like Jesus and love one another as he loves us. We need rules to give us direction, to help us grow in right living and strength of character. His teaching style takes us behind the letter of the law to the thinking and feeling that shape the early stages of acceptable or inadmissible conduct.

In this passage he focusses on anger. If not checked it eats away in us and can lead to serious consequences and even the death of others. But anger's energy can be turned to positive use. It can be harnessed to plant the seeds of tomorrow's good initiatives, bringing a determination that can enhance the choices we make to live better lives. Jesus also points out the corrosive effects of lust. We see it in news headlines and gossip columns with uncomfortable frequency. Yet our sexuality is one of God's gifts to us. It's the faculty and capacity to form relationships. We are social beings. The attractions and discipline of appreciating others are formative and life-changing energies that ideally contribute to a healthy world. The strength of our respectful relationships shows others what is possible when we live as givers, not takers, as honourable, not selfish disciples.

Jesus outlines that continuum whereby our inner thinking and desires can lead to external actions. He preaches a consistent working on ourselves along with a personal narrative of prayer – to not only keep our heads straight, but to develop a hundred ways of honouring one another in love and acceptance. Action needs to follow our prayer and our liturgies in simple regard for our neighbours in need. This sermon repays careful listening and revisiting after its hearing in church.



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Pope Francis on personal holiness

To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.

Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God, turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for you can do this in the power of the Holy Spirit, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (*cf Galatians 5:22-23*). When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say "Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better". In the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God's love, "like a bride bedecked with jewels" (*Isaiah 61:10*)

Rejoice and Be Glad—paras 14 and 15.