



SUNDAY 22 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

1st Sunday of Lent (A) - Matthew 4:1-11

Time and again I find myself really appreciating the Lord's prayer. Not just as a prayer to say, but as a rule of thumb summary of Jesus' life and teaching – why should I ever be surprised?! I do however regret how the prayer can come across when we all say it in church – often mechanically and too fast. Jesus didn't pray to his Father like that.

We're entering Lent, the sacred time for personal and communal reflection and action. On Lent's first Sunday in each year of our three-year cycle of Sunday Mass readings, we are given an account of Jesus' temptations in the desert. During these Lenten weeks it would be a pity to ignore our own temptations, but to rather choose to look honestly at our human frailty and how we engage practically with our spiritual selves. Our prayer is the soundtrack accompanying our efforts. Our loving Messiah urges us to turn to our Father – and his Father – and to ask that he 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'. We're God's sons and daughters. The Lord's Prayer is the blueprint and template of how we converse with our Father.

Jesus is the Son of God, affirmed at his baptism as the Father's beloved and filled with the Spirit. Yet the human Jesus of Nazareth has to work out how he brings his Father's Kingdom to the people of his time, to us and beyond. It's critical and he's tested. Notice it's the Spirit that leads his retreat into the wilderness on a journey of greater understanding and commitment. We're given some examples of the gnawing attractions that the evil one dangles before him.

You wouldn't want to face the Judean wilderness without sustenance. Rather than using his power to turn stones into bread to feed himself, he lives off the love of his Father and would later tell his followers, 'My meat is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work' (John 4: 34).

He faces the temptation of spectacular heroics, maybe throwing himself off the pinnacle of the temple, trusting God will save him – but he dismisses such stunts as wrongful ways to treat God. And after defying the attractions of political power over the seething cities of the world and 'all their glory', he banishes the tempter. But he's shattered. However we understand these temptations, the struggle is exhausting. He rests in the Father's love before going public in his mission of teaching, exorcising and healing the harassed and dejected people needing their good shepherd.

Fantasy lies at the heart of so much of what tempts us. The satisfactions of diversion are short lived and fraudulent. Our Lent is a workshop of the Spirit – a space to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Lent asks our time, foregoing other pursuits, many comparatively inconsequential, to remember we are spiritual beings, washed in baptismal grace and sent to do God's will 'on earth as it is in heaven'. It's a gifted time. Enjoy.



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Pope Francis on the quality of water

One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by micro-organisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are significant causes of suffering and of infant mortality. Underground water sources in many places are threatened by the pollution produced in certain mining, farming and industrial activities, especially in countries lacking adequate regulation or controls. It is not only a question of industrial waste. Detergents and chemical products, commonly used in many places of the world, continue to pour into our rivers, lakes and seas.

Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatise this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity. This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor. But water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. This shows that the problem of water is partly an educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behaviour within a context of great inequality.

Laudato Si—paras 29 and 30