



SUNDAY 9 AUGUST 2026

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

19th Sunday of the Year (A) - Matthew 14: 22-33

Today's brilliant Gospel story of Jesus walking on water is well known and 'walking on water' has become something of a metaphor for doing the impossible. Our story here, and what we choose to learn from it, takes us into our own and the Church's journey and experience of faith. As with so much that we read, the drama and setting of the incident engage the imagination and invite us to participate, to be personally present. Warning - we will get wet!

The Gospel episode here happens between three and six o'clock in the morning. It's dark. We're in a boat of indeterminate size, a long way from the land, being beaten by the waves and the wind is against us. Jesus stayed ashore, sending crowds off home and claiming personal time to pray, to immerse his humanity in his Father's love and blessing. Where and when he agreed to meet up with his followers is not given to us, but he chose to join with them, with us, while at sea struggling against the elements.

We may take this story at face value and we should. We're also sitting alongside St Matthew the Gospel writer whose message of the event shouldn't be missed.

Jesus comes to us in all manner of ways, often unexpected. In the story here, his presence causes alarm and fright. The people in the boat are tired, tense and wary enough, but Jesus coming to them in the darkness and the high wind, across the rough water, spooks the gang. He is quick to reassure them. No need to be afraid. The Lord, Master of the wind and the waves, refuses to abandon us, even if his timing and methods may be somewhat alternative. It's Peter, wonderful, impulsive Peter, who chooses to test the wind, the water and his own abilities in his wanting to be with his Master. But outside the protection of the boat and the closeness of his mates, he loses his nerve and starts to sink, crying out to Jesus before the Lord grabs him, holds him and chides him for his little faith and for doubting. We all doubt. At times we must.

But accept the criticism. Go over the past and see when the Lord has been there for you. His disguises are many while testing the faith that needs to grow in us. Interpretations of this Gospel incident see the Church as the tossed about boat, ever on a learning curve, recognising and responding to the Lord, be it in the needs of the poor, the fight for justice, truth and dignity. We learn over and over that our God is not just the longstop, the fallback when our efforts fail. We thank him when overcoming sickness and crises, when all is OK - until the next time when we do the same again. Stop/start faith develops in learning from what reflecting on this story gives us.

Be of good heart. We're being trained. Be not afraid.



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Pope Leo speaking of the common good

The Second Vatican Council affirmed that the common good consists in "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily." This definition provides us with a valuable initial reference point, because the common good cannot be reduced to a mere list of conditions or institutions. It is not the sum total of individual benefits, nor the intersection of their particular interests; it is a greater good that belongs to everyone, and can only be achieved, nurtured and protected by our collective efforts. We can say that social action reaches its fullness when it is directed toward this shared good, just as a person's moral action finds its fulfilment in the choice of the true good.

In this sense, we can say that the whole is "greater than the sum of its parts" and that, for this very reason, "the mere sum of individual interests is not capable of generating a better world for the whole human family." Indeed, it is an illusion to think that simply pursuing one's own progress without caring for others is sufficient for contributing to the good of all. This view ignores the inherent and specific value of the common good, which is the result of an "interdependence" that creates a network of social good that expands and has an impact on people. The common good is a *plus*, the result of interaction and mutual influence that connects various actions, initiatives, efforts and decisions. If we were to add up the individual goods, we could not explain the existence of this *plus* that transcends them and, at the same time, enriches them.

Magnifica Humanitas paras 60 and 61