



SUNDAY 30 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

22nd Sunday of the Year (A) - Matthew 16: 21-27

Stories are told of horrendous suffering in prisoner of war camps. And the question raised by not a few was 'Where is your God of love in all this?' And the best answer given? – 'I think you're looking at him'. Our God of love took on the religious leadership of his time and was repaid with the inevitable punishment of those who question distorted and selfish human authority.

Pain and suffering, loss and death, are inescapable parts of human life. Jesus accepts that standing up for God's kingdom values of truth and justice, freedom and love, has cruel consequences. Our martyrs preach the same message by their courage and truthfulness. They are following Jesus' words about taking up the cross – not like Simon Peter in this Gospel passage who wanted ways of avoiding the pain, the ignominy and the loss of the one he has just named as the Christ, the Son of God. Acceptance of difficulty and dread, be it illness – our own or that of significant others – containment or limitation, in some way is part of following Jesus who set Peter back here. His place and ours is to follow Jesus and the mysterious ways of God. The newly named 'Rock' is being taught a hard and invaluable lesson here.

A priest friend told me that, being unwell, he went to see his doctor, a devoted Methodist. The prognosis was not too good, and commenting, the doctor said, "You don't really need me to tell you what's going on here, do you?" Acceptance of the cross is a prior requirement of resurrection. Following God's ways takes us into a different world, as was pointed out emphatically to Peter by Jesus. I sympathise with Peter. If we can sensibly avoid pain and suffering, we should, but we tend to pray for healing, for alternatives to costly consequences of taking up the cross when it is the way through and not the way around what God may be asking. Discernment is needed here.

Jesus accompanies us and others in the crosses we carry. It's safe to assume that people are shouldering more than we're likely to know or ever find out about. Our own acceptance of suffering and hardship can bring us into a compassionate and respectful solidarity with those whose difficulties we know or are unknown to us. Our understanding can help carry their crosses and certainly avoid simplistic platitudes. I wonder if the crucifixes and crosses worn by others or dangled from inside mirrors of cars, manage to help their owners in following Gospel precepts?

Time and again I come back to the Lord's Prayer. It's not only the brilliant, prized pattern of praying given to us by the Lord, but it's a good summary of Jesus' teaching. In our praying for health and wellbeing and in times also of crisis, to pray 'Thy will be done' may not come easy. But it's the distilled experience of Jesus' life.



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Pope Leo on educating poor people and care for migrants

For the Christian faith, the education of the poor is not a favour but a duty. Children have a right to knowledge as a fundamental requirement for the recognition of human dignity. Teaching them affirms their value, giving them the tools to transform their reality. Christian tradition considers knowledge a gift from God and a community responsibility. Christian education does not only form professionals, but also people open to goodness, beauty and truth. Catholic schools, therefore, when they are true to their name, are places of inclusion, integral formation and human development. By combining faith and culture, they sow the seeds of the future, honour the image of God and build a better society.

The experience of migration accompanies the history of the People of God. Abraham sets out without knowing where he is going; Moses leads the pilgrim people through the desert; Mary and Joseph flee with the child Jesus to Egypt. Christ himself, who "came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him" (John 1: 11), lived among us as a stranger. For this reason, the Church has always recognised in migrants a living presence of the Lord who, on the day of judgement, will say to those on his right: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25: 35).

Dilexi Te paras 72 and 73