



SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 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

26th Sunday of the Year (A) - Matthew 21: 28-32

Jesus asked good questions and told intriguing stories. We know that. If we're honest, familiarity with the stories and cheering about the questions doesn't mean they lead to changes in our thinking or behaviour. As I once heard a district nurse say after giving a man a packet of tablets, 'These don't work if you don't take them!'

Jesus' stories remain good and we can savour their wisdom. We can preach about the teaching the stories carry. We can do holy things all day and not become holy. It's hard for any of us to practise what we preach. The best preaching doesn't need words; actions surpass the finest speech. Pope Francis had a very active image of the Church. He wanted the Church to be like a field hospital, he wanted it to be dirty from being out on the streets. It's on the streets where the words spoken in church are judged. For good or ill, our lives are a living sermon.

The Gospel passage given us today is about changing one's mind – mine, yours, ours. The call to repent means just that – to change my mind, to choose to do something different and better, to look honestly at myself rather than avoiding what I might learn. Being stuck in my ways may be an uncomfortable truth. We can be enslaved by our opinions and forget our knowledge is only finite. I hear a man said to his priest, 'I won't promise you about coming back to church, Father, because when I make a promise I keep it.' The priest noted privately that we only make a promise if there's a chance that it can be broken. Otherwise it's not necessary. Food there for thought – and action.

We know the real thing when we see it. Literally tons of government inquiries and reports take up vast storage space, but detailed observations and critical findings don't always generate movement. Laws, rules, budgets, overloaded agendas and fear of precedents sharpen vested interests and lead to postponement and loss of the energy that drives the change that makes good things happen. It's clear at institutional level but it's maybe a projection of personal traits. Changing our thinking, upsetting our comfort and world view, is a challenge we might embrace from this Sunday's Gospel.

As many of the Lord's parables are, it's a crafty story. This one confronts the pharisee in us, catching us holding fixed opinions and making defensive responses to change. It's freeing to recognise any complacency and the 'always getting round to it' in us. Getting our hands dirty, admitting we're wrong, are telltale signs of movement. When celebs, Influencers and pop idols soak up media time and space, it takes me back to stories of saints who chose to seek first the Kingdom and changed themselves, others and the world. Gospel love never rests. Neither do we if we can change our minds. The story goes, if you don't change, check your pulse – you may be dead!



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

On Love for the Poor – more from Pope Leo

The Second Vatican Council represented a milestone in the Church's understanding of the poor in God's saving plan. Although this theme remained marginal in the preparatory documents, St John XXIII, in his Radio Message of 11th September 1962, a month before the opening of the Council, called attention to the issue. In his memorable words, "the Church presents herself as she is and as she wishes to be: the Church of all and in particular the Church of the poor." The intense efforts of bishops, theologians and experts concerned with the renewal of the Church – with the support of St John XXIII himself – gave the Council a new direction. The centrality of Christ in these considerations both on a doctrinal and social level would prove fundamental. Many Council Fathers supported this approach, as eloquently expressed by Cardinal Lercaro in his intervention of 6th December 1962: "The mystery of Christ in the Church has always been and today is, in a particular way, the mystery of Christ in the poor." He went on to say that, "this is not simply one theme among others, but in some sense the only theme of the Council as a whole." The Archbishop of Bologna, in preparing the text for this intervention, noted the following: "This is the hour of the poor, of the millions of the poor throughout the world. This is the hour of the mystery of the Church as mother of the poor. This is the hour of the mystery of Christ, present especially in the poor." There was a growing sense of the need for a new image of Church, one simpler and more sober, embracing the entire people of God and its presence in history: a Church more closely resembling her Lord than worldly powers and working to foster a concrete commitment on the part of all humanity to solving the immense problem of poverty in the world.

Dilexi Te para 84