

DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE



*✠ Rt Rev Séamus Cunningham
Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle*



Pastoral Letter for Pentecost to be read in all parishes on the weekend of 3rd and 4th June 2017

My Dear People

When I read today's account of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, I always imagine that they have locked themselves in a room out of fear. They seemed to do this fairly regularly. Jesus appeared through locked doors to reassure them; he walked with two of them to Emmaus as they escaped out of fear of the future; he waited on them as they fished on the Lake. But they continued to be afraid and huddled together for their own safety.

In the Gospel from John today, we hear how Jesus appeared in the midst of the fearful disciples to bring them peace. He breathes the Holy Spirit over his disheartened followers and they in turn breathe in the Spirit and are transformed. Their hearts are renewed. They become fearless and courageous.

Over the last three years we have prayed that the Holy Spirit would pour out grace and guidance upon us, forming us and renewing us. We have prayed for inspiration and for the courage to be open to change and move forward together in hope.

Today we come together throughout the Diocese to affirm that we are indeed moving from parishes to partnerships. It is extraordinary how so many parishioners in our diocese have been involved in our journey, through their prayers, reflections, meetings, discussion and volunteering. Without you it simply would not have happened. It has all been about us renewing our relationship with God, discovering how to become more aware of our call to be disciples of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has brought us to where we are.

St Paul tells us in today's second reading that the same Spirit is with us today: 'working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them'. We are now faced with new opportunities to use our God given gifts to serve one another and the world we live in as disciples of Jesus. There will be a range of formation programmes to help us all deepen our awareness of what it means to be disciples of the Lord. You will be aware that I have appointed Partnership Deans to lead our new Partnerships, and with the assistance of your local Episcopal Vicars they will help to take it all forward.

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I am sure that they will be very keen to encourage more parishioners to become fully involved in setting up groups to help with the formation of Partnerships in the future. There will also be more opportunities for the skills and talents of lay people to help our local communities manage their property, finance, administration and communication.

The invitation to us today is to leave behind whatever fear we might have and, trusting in the Holy Spirit, commit ourselves more closely together in the future.

I invite you to pray now for our Diocese as we formally acknowledge our new Partnerships and look forward to us all witnessing to the Lord in new ways.

With my very best wishes

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "+ Séamus". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Séamus" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

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Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

Please stand to join in our prayer...

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