**Sunday 30th April 2023: Acts 2: 42-47**

***42****And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.****43****And awe[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=acts+2+&version=ESV#fen-ESV-26981d)*] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.****44****And all who believed were together and had all things in common.****45****And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.****46****And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,****47****praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

**Notes**

When the Apostle Peter, a man without training, without education, without anything actually apart from having lived and worked with Jesus for 3 years, and knowing that despite his terrible denial in His Lord’s hour of need, he was forgiven, reconciled and included, preached his very first sermon. The result was startling: 3,000 are added to the Church (v41). And that’s just day 1.But those 3,000 people would have included both rich and poor, people with plenty and people in need. Strangely, although Peter’s teaching is not recorded as having touched on the point, people knew instinctively that wasn’t right. They wanted to share. They wanted to give. This is always the reaction of those who have been truly touched by God.

What did the wider community think of this generosity? Did people think they were mad to give away their possessions and share what they had with people from different social backgrounds and nationalities, complete strangers until a few days before? Were they laughed at or told they were being scammed? Quite the opposite: It seemed this counter-cultural way of living found favour with the community at large. Yet more were added to the Church as the days progressed.

Later, as we know, they introduced a level of administration into their giving. Stephen, who became the first Christian martyr, and a few others were appointed deacons. This meant they could ensure no-one was being overlooked. It wouldn’t be the case that everyone would give to the same need, some would be inundated with blessing whilst other needs would go unnoticed.

Here in the Diocese of Newcastle we have this wonderful system called Parish Share. It allows those Parishes who have more to contribute more, so that those who have less can continue with their ministry. The Diocese has also benefited from amazingly generous gifts from other Dioceses who have made generous gifts to us, as other parts of the country likewise seek to share their resources with us.

So what’s our response to finding faith? Is it like those first 3,000 believers? Do we find we are so impacted by the power of the gospel that we too wish to give, to support the ministry of our local parish church, and contribute to sharing resources and needs across the Diocese? Let the words of the Acts account challenge us, as we ask God privately what it should mean for us.

**End**