



The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

Homily for S Mark's Day/APCM (25th April) 2026

New Testament scholars sometimes explore the question of what type of literature a Gospel is: biography, perhaps, or history or theological presentation. Often, they fall back on the view that the Gospels are a bit of all of these and, maybe other things; and that, in short, they are in a class of their own.

To a great extent, this is an academic question, because the more important issue is what part the Gospels play in the life of the Church; and here, we might refer to the words at the end of the fourth Gospel, "these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing, you may have life in his name." Saint Mark would concur with this, opening his Gospel, as he does, with the words, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We proclaim the texts of the Gospels in our Liturgies, read them in private and reflect on them to sustain and develop our Christian faith and through that discipline strengthen ourselves for the mission entrusted to the Church: the task of making known to the world the truths embedded in the texts of the Gospel.

All of this might seem far removed from the world of Annual Parochial Church Meetings and the panoply of administrative activity, which underpins it. Here, we seem to be looking inwards, allocating resources of time and money to talking about ourselves - the good, the bad and the ... well ... the slightly unpalatable.

Administration is rather like one of the magical artefacts that, if constrained to its intended purpose can be of great use and benefit, but which has the capacity slowly to take over its possessor, rendering her or him its servant rather than its mistress or master.

Organisations can quite quickly become overrun with administrative activity, which stifles their purpose. However, without a sufficient administrative framework, organisations can become chaotically unable to deliver their desired ends.

With this in mind, Pope Leo has convened a consistory of the Roman Catholic cardinals to discuss how the administrative apparatus of the Vatican can be re-modelled to reflect more efficiently the missionary work of the Church, making it not the enemy of the Church's goals, but her ally.

It is this perspective, which should inform our approach to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting: we should be reflecting on the impact that the information contained in the various reports makes on our mission to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Son of God: a mission rooted in our own developing Faith.

The APCM is not the same thing as a corporate AGM where shareholders scrutinise the performance of a board of directors over the past year. Rather it is a moment for us to consider together how, given certain salient factors - as detailed in the Annual Report - we have all contributed to the mission of our Christian community and how elements of our context have affected that work - and how they might continue so to do in the year ahead, as well as how we might mitigate or take advantage of them.

The APCM is not generally the moment to debate these questions in detail. Rather it is a moment to share the information, which we will need to consider the issues confronting us. This will not be undertaken, for the most part, in the stylised discussions of a committee meeting, but in frequent conversations of small groups day by day, with the threads being formally drawn together at a meeting of the PCC when we are ready.

Like a Gospel, the APCM cannot be categorised with reference to other apparently similar events in other fields. It is in a class of its own, because it is infused with the missionary purpose of the Church.