



# SUNDAY 30 APRIL 2023

## DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington  
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

### ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

#### 4th Sunday of Easter (A): John 10: 1-10

The conversation blew up suddenly and became quite a discussion.

The trigger that kicked off some energetic participation was Emily's talking nostalgically about Benediction and May processions. It lit the fire under Harriett who thought that would be taking us backwards. No one wanted to cause offence but we covered a range of loves and disappointments.

The distinction is a touch simplistic, but are we people of the Gospel or people of the institution? Do we sometimes get over-churchy? We are the community of the followers of Jesus. Our Church is here to help us become more like him, hopefully constantly keeping us sharp in mind and heart to serve our changing world.

Our Gospel passage today is stark. Jesus is our doorkeeper. He doesn't keep us closeted in a comfy sheepfold - he leads us out, feeds us on good pastures, dependent on his leadership and direction. Effectively he's saying 'beware of imitations', no one else compares. Changes within Church life should be focused on our spiritual development, loving God and neighbour. Be conscious of the help and the danger of habit. It's why the Gospel constantly challenges us. Comfort zones can be seductive. We're learners, forever students, and the Master has our best interests at heart. We're followers. Even if we lag behind, he spots it and comes for the strays and stragglers.

We don't delight in being likened to sheep, but we surely acknowledge that we need looking after. The Lord's care for us teaches us in turn how we are to care for one another and for the creation entrusted to us. He has come so that we may have life and have it to the full—it's about love and nothing less. The words and the images are an attempt to pass on to us something of the profound experience of St John the Gospel writer's time spent with Jesus and we share the benefit of his reflecting on it all. His inspired message should never be taken lightly or read hurriedly- its real gold.

We have the awesome privilege and responsibility of doing Jesus' work. It requires a familiarity with his person, message and style. Can I make a suggestion? Go back. Read the Gospel for today again. Give it some ten minutes or more. Then later, do it again and attend to what it may be saying to you. And thank you.



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### **Pope Francis talking about war**

Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims. Let us look once more at all those civilians whose killing was considered 'collateral damage'. Let us ask the victims themselves. Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood. Let us hear the true stories of these victims of violence, look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naïve for choosing peace.

Rules by themselves will not suffice if we continue to think that the solution to current problems is deterrence through fear or the threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Indeed, 'if we take into consideration the principal threats to peace and security with their many dimensions in this multipolar world of the twenty-first century as, for example, terrorism, uneven conflicts, cybersecurity, environmental problems and poverty not a few doubts arise regarding the inadequacy of nuclear deterrence as an effective response to such challenges. These concerns are even greater when we consider the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would follow from any use of nuclear weapons, with devastating, indiscriminate and uncontainable effects, over time and space. We need also to ask ourselves how sustainable is a stability based on fear, when it actually increases fear and undermines relationships of trust between peoples.

- *Fratelli tutti* paras 261-262