



SUNDAY 26 APRIL 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

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- it's 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 Leo speaking about Jesus' social status

There are some clues about Jesus' social status. First of all, he worked as a craftsman or carpenter, *tekton* (cf Mark 6:3). These were people who earned their living by manual labour. Not owning land, they were considered inferior to farmers. When the baby Jesus was presented in the temple by Joseph and Mary, his parents offered a pair of turtledoves or pigeons (cf Luke 2: 22-24), which according to the prescriptions of the Book of Leviticus (cf 12:8) was the offering of the poor. A fairly significant episode in the Gospel tells us how Jesus, together with his disciples, gathered heads of grain to eat as they passed through the fields (cf Mark 2: 23-28). Only the poor were allowed to do this gleaning in the fields. Moreover, Jesus says of himself: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (Matthjew 8: 20 and Luke 9: 58). He is, in fact, an itinerant teacher, whose poverty and precariousness are signs of his bond with the Father. They are also conditions for those who wish to follow him on the path of discipleship. In this way, the renunciation of goods, riches and worldly securities becomes a visible sign of entrusting oneself to God and his providence.

Dilexi Te para 20.