

THE OTHER SHEEP NOT OF THIS FOLD

THERE ARE OTHER SHEEP I HAVE NOT OF THIS FOLD AND THESE I MUST LEAD AS WELL. I welcome the Knights of St. Columba to this Holy Mass, which we offer for the repose of members who have died this last year, and indeed, in this month of November, for all the faithful departed. I must admit, although I've worked in various parishes, I've little direct experience myself of the Knights, except in church car parks, when en route to a special event you've done a fantastic job organising parking! But your fraternity is about much more than that! For as your constitution says, you exist for your own spiritual upbuilding and for the service of the Church. But let me come back to this in a moment.

First, a word about the Gospel we've just heard, from John 10, about Jesus the Good Shepherd, who is not a hired man or a temp called in to help, but the one who actually owns the sheep. He passionately cares about them, every single one of them, and he is even willing to lay down his life for them. This of course is what happened. On the Cross Jesus died for us, which is why in every Mass he lays down his life for you and for me, that we might rise to new life. But tonight let me draw attention to those enigmatic words of Jesus: THERE ARE OTHER SHEEP I HAVE, NOT OF THIS FOLD, AND THESE I MUST LEAD AS WELL. The Son of God has a universal mission to every single child, woman and man on this planet. He is the Saviour of all, and through the Holy Spirit, in a manner known only to Him, he offers everyone in some way the possibility of eternal salvation. Think of the countless millions in our own society in Britain today, people of good will, yet people distant from Christ and his Church. These too need to be offered the chance of a personal-passionate saving relationship with the Lord.

In arranging tonight, we wanted to have a Votive Mass of St. Columba, your patron, but today the universal Church asks us to celebrate St. Charles Borromeo, that outstanding Bishop of Milan (d. 1581), the first of a new breed of bishop who implemented the reforms of the Council of Trent. Espousing a simple life-style to practice what he preached, he helped to educate and care for the clergy; he devised a Catechism and courses for the laity, and set up charitable services for the poor, with aims not dissimilar from the Knights. But what makes him especially dear to us was his concern for England, his devotion to St. John Fisher. Indeed, on their way back to the English mission where they would most likely face martyrdom, newly ordained priests from the Venerable English College Rome would often call on him, to seek his blessing.

THERE ARE OTHER SHEEP I HAVE NOT OF THIS FOLD AND THESE I MUST LEAD AS WELL. In our time, with great urgency, the Church calls us to the work of new evangelisation, which, like breathing, is two-way, breathing in and breathing out. It's first about ourselves growing in love for Christ and our Catholic faith (breathing in) so that (breathing out), we will seek new methods and new ways of engaging others, not least the countless men and women of our time who do not know the Lord and his offer of salvation. In this Mass, Christ the Good Shepherd lays down his life for us. We pray to him for our departed loved ones. But let us also pray for his blessing upon the work of the Knights, and indeed, upon all the people of

our wonderful Diocese of Portsmouth. May all of us be filled with the love of the Heart of Jesus, and by our new ardour, may we attract others to know, love and serve the Lord.