



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
Knights of Malta

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Chancellor's Update

I Am the Good Shepherd

Last month's Update showed how the bishops were causing confusion. How can the faithful determine how Christ expects a bishop to administer his office? St John Chrysostom provided an explanation to dispel the confusion caused by today's bishops. Also see October 2013 Update to understand today's happenings.

John x. II-14. It is a grave thing, Beloved, a grave thing indeed to have the care of a church; it is a task that needs a measure of love and courage as great as that of which Christ spoke, so that a man may lay down his life for his flock, may never abandon them, and may boldly face the wolf. It is in this the shepherd differs from the hireling. For the latter, indifferent to the sheep, is ever watchful of his own safety; while the former, regardless of his own safety, seeks that of his sheep.

And having indicated to them the signs of the true shepherd, He tells them of the two kinds of despoilers. One is the thief, who kills and steals. The other does not himself destroy, but should these things take place, he does not prevent them. By the one He refers to the followers of a certain Theudas; by the other He exposes the teachers of the Jews, who had no concern for the sheep that were entrusted to them. And because of this of old Ezechias had reproached them, saying: Woe to the shepherds of Israel! That fed themselves: should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? (Ezech. xxxiv. 2). But they did the opposite; which is wickedness of the worst kind, and the cause of all other evils. And because of this he says: they have not led back those that strayed, nor sought for those that were lost, nor bound up those that were broken, nor healed those that were sick, because they fed themselves and did not feed my sheep.

And this Paul also says, in other words: For all seek the things that are their own; not the things that are Jesus Christ's (Phil. ii. 21), and again: Let no man seek his own; but that which is another's (I Cor. x. 24). From both kinds (of despoilers) Christ distinguishes himself. From those that come to plunder by saying: I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly (v. 10); and from those who care nothing whether the sheep are taken by the wolves, by not deserting them, and by laying down His life that they may not perish. For when they sought to put Him to death He neither withdrew His teaching, or betrayed those believing in Him; but stood firm, and chose to die.

And so everywhere He says: I am the good shepherd. Then because His words seemed to be without testimony (for the words, I lay down my life were fulfilled a little later; the words, that they may have life, and have it more abundantly, were to come to pass after their departure from this life) what does He do? He proves the one by the other; namely, in that He gave His own life He will also give life. This Paul also teaches: For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rom. v. 10). And again, in another place: He that spared not even his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things? (Rom. viii. 32).

But why do they not say to Him as they said before: Thou givest testimony of thyself: thy testimony is not true? (Jn. viii. 13). Because he had often forced them to be silent; and because He was less interrupted as through His miracles people drew near to Him with greater confidence. Then, because He had just said: And the sheep hear his voice, and follow him (v. 3), lest anyone should say: What of those who do not believe in Him? hear what He adds: And I know my sheep, and my sheep know me. This Paul also indicated: God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew (Rom. xi. 2); and also Moses: The Lord knoweth who are his (II Tim. ii. 19; Num. xvi. 5): those, he says, whom He foreknew.

Then that you might not think their knowledge equal, hear how He corrects this by what follows: I know mine, He says, and mine know me. But their knowing is not equal. But where is there equal knowledge? In the Father and in Me. For, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father. For unless He wished to assert this, why did he bring it forward? For the reason that frequently He placed Himself as one among the many, and so that no one would therefore think that He knew the Father as man, He adds: As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father. Thus I know Him precisely as He knows Me. Accordingly He said: No one knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son (Lk. x. 22), indicating a certain special knowledge, such as no one else could attain to. I lay down my life for my sheep. This He says frequently, showing that He is not an uncertain person. In the same way the Apostle, when he wished to prove that he was a true teacher, and was defending himself against certain pretended apostles, he appealed to his stripes and his deaths, saying: In stripes above measure, in deaths often (II Cor. xi. 23). For should He say: 'I am light, I am life', it would seem to the foolish that He was speaking from vanity. But to say: I am ready to lay down my life awakened no envy. Because of this they do not here say to Him, Thou givest testimony of thyself: thy testimony is not true. For His words reveal a tender concern for them, as though He were indeed prepared to give Himself for those who were ready to stone Him.

2. Because of this He here makes a timely reference to the Gentiles. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring. Notice however that the word must which He here uses does not imply necessity, but indicates something what will of a certainty come to pass; as though He had said: Why wonder if these follow Me, and if they shall hear My voice? For when you shall see others following Me, and hearkening to my voice, then will you be much more astonished.

And do not be troubled because He says: That are not of this fold. For the distinction arises only from the Law, as Paul says: Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing (I Cor. vii. 19).

And them also I must bring. He shows that both flocks were scattered, and that both the one and the other are without shepherds, for the Good Shepherd had not yet come.

Then He proclaims their future union: And there shall be one fold. And this same Paul has also declared: That he might make the two in himself into one new man (Eph. ii. 15); through Jesus Christ Our Lord, to Whom be praise and honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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