

Ancient Commentary

(Fourth Sunday of Eastertide - Year C)



The Liturgy Letter

A Selection of Church Fathers on John 10:22-30

Augustine: “It was winter,” and they were chilled because they were slow to approach that divine fire. For to approach is to believe: the one who believes, approaches; the one who denies, moves away. The soul is not moved by the feet but by the affections. They had become icy cold to the sweetness of loving him, and they burned with the desire of doing him an injury. They were far away, while there beside him.

Augustine: What is the voice of the shepherd? “And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name throughout all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” There is the voice of the shepherd. Recognize it and follow if you are a sheep.

Augustine: This is the pasture of which he spoke before when he said, “And he shall go in and out and find pasture.” ... The good pasture is called eternal life. The grass there does not wither, and everywhere it is green and flourishing.... But you are only looking to misrepresent my words because you only think about this present life. When he says, then, “and they shall not perish,” you can hear the undertone of what was said, as if he had said to them: you shall perish eternally because you are not of my sheep.

Augustine: In his divinity, he is equal to the Father; by his incarnation, he is subject to the Father.

Cyril of Alexandria: The mark of Christ’s sheep is their willingness to hear and obey, just as disobedience is the mark of those who are not his. We take the word *hear* to imply obedience to what has been said. People who hear God are known by him. No one is entirely unknown by God, but to be known in this way is to become part of his family. Therefore, when Christ says, “I know mine,” he means I will receive them and give them a permanent mystical relationship with myself.

It might be said that inasmuch as he has become man, he has made all human beings his relatives since all are members of the same race. We are all united to Christ in a mystical relationship because of his incarnation. Yet those who do not preserve the likeness of his holiness are alienated from him.... “My sheep follow me,” says Christ. By a certain God-given grace, believers follow in the footsteps of Christ. No longer subject to the shadows of the law, they obey the commands of Christ and guided by his words rise through grace to his own dignity, for they are called “children of God.” When Christ ascends into heaven, they also follow him.

Cyril of Alexandria: The faithful also have the help of Christ, and the devil is not able to snatch them. Those who have an endless enjoyment of good things remain in Christ's hand, no one thereafter snatching them away from the bliss that is given to them. [No one can throw them] into punishment or torments. For it is not possible that those who are in Christ's hand should be snatched away to be punished because of the great might Christ has. For "the hand" in the divine Scripture signifies "the power." It cannot be doubted therefore that the hand of Christ is unconquerable and mighty to all things.

Cyprian: The Lord says, "I and the Father are one." And again of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit it is written, "And these three are one." Does anyone believe that this unity that comes from divine strength, which is closely connected with the divine sacraments, can be broken asunder in the church and be separated by the division of colliding wills?

Cyril of Alexandria: We say the Son and the Father "are one," not to blend their individuality by the use of that number, as some do who say that the Father and the Son are the same [person]. Rather, we believe that the Father and the Son are two unique persons, and we regard the two together in one identical essence, knowing that they possess one might, so that this divine essence is seen without variation in both.