

## GOSPEL OF JOHN 10A (1-:1-13)

Note: A study on the relationship between the Gospel of John and the ancient Jewish lectionary (a cycle of readings) that ‘*on the Sabbath nearest the feast of Dedication*’ (Consecration and renewal of the Temple, 10:22) virtually all the readings contain the theme of sheep and shepherds and of God the Shepherd of Israel. (Fr. Behr, John the Theologian and his Paschal Gospel).

John 10:1-21 is a continuation of the discussion that preceded in chapter 9 about the healing of the man born blind. So, John 7:1-10:21 are to be seen as a complete unit (Behr).

In the Bible the Kings of Israel are called the Shepherds of Israel...*The Lord is my Shepherd* is rendered in the Septuagint, *The Lord Shepherds*, the Lord does the act of Shepherding. (Fr. Hopko, The Names of Jesus)

In the New Testament, the bishops are the “Over-Seerers” of the Church, the flock and are given specific charisms (Teaching, Sanctifying, Administrative, Juridical) in order to be the Chief Shepherds of the Church. In turn, they appoint Presbyters, or Priests to shepherd the flock in their absence.

Theodore of Mopsuestia: “The shepherd of the sheep is the one who is worthily endowed with the gift of teaching. He is the one who uses the lawful entrance, that is, who lives with all his heart according to the doctrine of the law (of Christ) ... Then he leads others, like sheep, to the pastures of doctrine by showing them the food of the Word with which they must nourish themselves...”

**Verily, verily I say to you, the *one* who enters not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but goes up from another place, that one is a thief and a robber.**

The double *Amen* is unique to the teachings of Jesus and it emphasizes that this is non-negotiable, (Hopko)

**<sup>2</sup>“But the *one* who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>“To this one the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls *his* own sheep by name and leads them out.**

“In the Bible when the name of something is known, so is its reality. The one who knows the name of something has a kind of control over it...When He says he knows the sheep by name, it means He knows who they are. He knows each one, in his or her uniqueness...If we are creatures, we have a Creator. We are servants...We have to know His voice; we have to hear his voice (Hopko, The Names of Jesus).”

**<sup>4</sup>“And whenever he should put forth *his* own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice.**

**The sheep follow freely, voluntarily**

“... if we are going to identify ourselves as sheep with Jesus as our Shepherd, then we must follow Him voluntarily...the obedient sheep do not follow out of constraint...The Shepherd may use the staff to pull back a wondering sheep but He does not use that staff to hurt them. He uses it to protect them from wolves and other dangers. There is no compulsion, no beating, He does not push

them into the pen, they follow freely. If you see a man forcing sheep into a pen and beating them...he is not a shepherd but a butcher (Hopko).”

**<sup>5</sup>“But a stranger in no wise will they follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup>This parable Jesus spoke to them; but they understood not what it was which He spoke to them.**

*Jesus continues to explain his parable*

**<sup>7</sup>Then said Jesus to them again, “Verily, verily, I say to you that I am the door of the sheep.**

**<sup>8</sup>All, as many as came before Me, are thieves and robbers; but the sheep heard them not.**

Chrysostom: “Observe the marks of a robber. First, he does not enter openly. Second, he does not enter according to the Scriptures, for this is *not by the door*...And He rightly calls the Scriptures a door, for they bring us to God and open to us the knowledge of God. They make us His sheep. They guard us and do not let wolves come in after us...In that He introduces us to the Father He is the door; in that He takes care of us, He is the Shepherd.”

**<sup>9</sup>“I am the door; by Me if anyone should enter, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out and find pasture.**

Augustine: “Who is he that enters by the door? It is he who enters in by Christ. Who is he? He is the one who imitates the suffering of Christ, who is acquainted with the humility of Christ so as to feel and to know that if God became man for us, a man should not think himself God but human.”

Saint Gregory the Great: “‘He shall go in and go out and find pasture.’ He shall go in to faith. He shall go out from faith to vision, from belief to contemplation. He shall find pasture in everlasting refreshment. His sheep shall find pasture because whoever follows Him with a guileless heart is nourished with a food of everlasting freshness. What are the pastures of these sheep but the everlasting joys of an ever green paradise? The pasture of the elect is the countenance of God in person. When we see Him perfectly our hearts are endlessly satisfied with the food of life. Those who have evaded the traps of temporary pleasures rejoice in those pastures with the fullness of eternity. There are choirs of angels singing hymns, there the company of heavenly citizens....”

**<sup>10</sup>“The thief comes not, except that he might steal, and slay, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have *it* abundantly. <sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**

Saint Chrysostom: “‘I am the good shepherd.’ Here He speaks concerning the Passion, showing that this is to be for the salvation of the world, and that He is not coming to it unwillingly. Then He speaks giving the pattern of the shepherd again and the hireling.”

Saint Kyril: “He flatters Jesus (Good Teacher) and attempts to deceive Him, even though he makes pretense of being well-disposed to Him....The purport of what Christ spoke is: ‘If you did not believe that I am God...why did you apply to Me epithets suitable to the supreme nature alone?’ God indeed is good, or the good absolutely, but angels and men are good only by being made partakers of the good God.”

**<sup>12</sup>“But the hireling, who indeed is not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf seizes them and scatters the sheep.**

**<sup>13</sup>“Now the hireling flees, because he is a hireling and cares not about the sheep.**

Saint Gregory the Great: “That person is a hireling who holds the place of shepherd but does not seek to profit souls. He is eager for earthly advantages, rejoices in the honor of preferment, feeds on temporal gain, and enjoys the deference offered him. These are his rewards....Such a one cannot make a stand when the sheep are in danger. Now because he esteems honor and enjoys his temporal advantages, he is afraid to oppose the danger lest he lose what he loves....When an unrighteous intruder falls upon the humble believers it is a wolf coming upon the sheep....But there is another wolf that snatches and scatters the sheep, tearing apart the minds of believers in temptation. The hireling does not take responsibility to protect the sheep. Souls are perishing and he enjoys his earthly advantages. No zeal rouses the hireling against these temptations, no love excites him. He seeks only the outward advantages and carelessly allows the inward injury to his flock.”