December 7th: Memorial of Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Gospel text (*Jn* 10,11-16): «I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Not so the hired hand or any other person who is not the shepherd and to whom the sheep do not belong. They abandon the sheep as soon as they see the wolf coming; then the wolf snatches and scatters the sheep. This is because the hired hand works for pay and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father. Because of this I give my life for my sheep».

«The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep»

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García
(Rubí, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we value how appropriate is the image of the good Shepherd when applying it to St. Ambrose. «The good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep», Jesus says, and this is what Ambrose actually did during his pastoral ministry in Milan. We can assert that in that local Church there was a before and an after Ambrose.

After the death of the arian Auxentius, the election of the new Bishop of Milan was becoming a very complicated issue, as partisanships and a strong division anticipated the worst; for this reason the city police led by Ambrose was summoned to guarantee order. Ambrose was getting ready to receive the baptism. At a given moment of argument and controversy, a voice was heard: "Ambrose, Bishop". The applause was unanimous, and with the crowd applauding him, he saw no other option but to accept the election. In a few days he was baptized and received the Holy orders, becoming thus the most illustrious Bishop of Milan.

His Ministry was marked by firmness, charity, prudence and his great organizational ability, all virtues that reinstated the unity of the Milanese Church: «Through justice, truth hovers over the ruins of the opinions that once ruled the world». Ambrose cultivated the study of theology, explained the Christian doctrine in gifted sermons and fostered the liturgy, thus qualifying for the title of Doctor of the Church. It was him who introduced in the Christian life and baptized Saint Augustine, whose light also shone in the history of the Church.

'I know my sheep and they know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father'; Thanks to this experience of prayer and knowledge of Jesus Christ, Ambrose became an excellent pastor in the image of the good Shepherd.