St. Ambrose of Milan, *In Ps.118*: 22: 176
Quaere, inquit, *seruum tuum, quoniam mandata tua non sum oblitus*

Quaere, inquit, *seruum tuum, quoniam mandata tua non sum oblitus* (Ps.118:176). ueni ergo, domine Iesu, quaere seruum tuum, quaere lassam ouem tuam, ueni, pastor, quaere sicut oues Ioseph. errauit ouis tua, dum tu moraris, dum tu uersaris in montibus. dimitte nonaginta nouem oues tuas et ueni unam ouem quaerere quae errauit. ueni sine canibus, ueni sine malis operariis, ueni sine mercennario, qui per ianuam introire non nouerit. ueni sine adiutore, sine nuntio, iam dudum te expecto uenturum; scio enim uenturum, quoniam mandata tua non sum oblitus. ueni non cum uirga, sed cum caritate spirituque mansuetudinis. (22.28)

"Seek," he says, "your servant, since I have not forgotten your commands." Come, then, Lord Jesus, seek your servant, seek your weary sheep. Come, my Shepherd, look for your sheep as Joseph looked for his flock (cf. Gen.37:14). Your sheep has wandered while you tarry, while you pass your time in the mountains. Leave your ninety-nine sheep and come search out the one sheep who has strayed. Come without hounds, come without evil workmen, come without the hired man, who knows not how to enter by the gate (Jn.10.1). Come without an assistant, without a herald. For a long time now I have been waiting for you to come. I know indeed you will come, *since I have not forgotten your commands* (Ps.118:176). Come without the rod, but with charity and the spirit of gentleness.

Noli dubitare relinquere in montibus nonaginta nouem oues tuas, quia in montibus constitutas lupi rapaces incursare non possunt. in paradiso semel nocuit serpens; amisit ibi escam, postquam Adam inde depulsus est; illic iam nocere non poterit. ad me ueni, quem luporum grauium uexat incursus. ad me ueni, quem eiectum de paradiso serpentis diu ulceris uenena pertemptant, qui erraui a gregibus tuis illis superioribus. nam et me ibidem conlocaueras, sed ab ouilibus tuis lupus nocturnus auertit. quaere me, quia te requiro, quaere me, inueni me, suscipe me, porta me. potes inuenire quem tu requiri dignaris, suscipere quem inueneris, inponere umeris quem susceperis. non est tibi pium onus fastidio, non tibi oneri est uectura iustitiae. ueni ergo, domine, quia, etsi erraui, tamen *mandata tua non sum oblitus*, spem medicinae reseruo. ueni, domine, quia et erraticam solus es reuocare qui possis et quos reliqueris non maestificabis; et ipsi enim peccatoris reditu gratulabuntur. ueni, ut facias salutem in terris, in caelo gaudium. (22.29)

Do not hesitate to leave in the mountains your ninety-nine sheep, since in the mountains ravening wolves cannot ambush those you have settled there. Once only the serpent bit in Paradise; there he lost his prey, after Adam had been expelled. There, now, he cannot injure. Come to me, harassed by raids of dreadful wolves. Come to me, expelled from Paradise, sorely tempted by the poisons of the long festering bite. I have wandered from those flocks of yours up on the heights; for you had gathered me too up there with them. But the nocturnal wolf lured me away from your flocks. Seek me, since I seek you. Seek me, find me, lift me, carry me. You can find whomever you deign to seek, lift the one you find, lay upon your shoulders the one you lift. You feel no revulsion for this loving burden, no annoyance to bear it for justice' sake. So come, Lord, since even though I have wandered, *I have not forgotten your commands*; I cling to my hope in your cure. Come, Lord, for you are the only one who can call back the wanderer and you will not grieve those you left behind; but these will rejoice at the return of a sinner. Come, that you may bring salvation to earth and joy to Heaven.

Ueni ergo et quaere ouem tuam non per seruulos, non per mercennarios, sed per temetipsum. suscipe me in carne quae in Adam lapsa est. suscipe me non ex Sarra, sed ex Maria, ut incorrupta sit uirgo, sed uirgo per gratiam ab omni integra labe peccati. porta me in cruce quae salutaris errantibus est, in qua sola est requies fatigatis, in qua sola uiuent quicumque moriuntur. (22.30)

Come, therefore, and seek your sheep not through servants, not through mercenaries, but by yourself. Lift me up in the flesh that in Adam fell. Lift me up, [born] not of Sarah but of Mary, as she is a virgin incorrupt, indeed a virgin by grace free from all stain of sin. Carry me on the cross that brings salvation for the wandering, in which alone is rest for the weary, in which alone whoever dies shall live.

Note: verse 176 is the last verse of Ps.118 (119), the longest psalm of the Psalter and dedicated to praise of the Law. The psalmist realizes that it is not the Law, finally, that can save us, but rather the mercy of God manifest in Christ. This verse is a magnificent preparation for the imagery of the lost sheep and the Good Shepherd, which Christ will use so eloquently when He comes.