

John: 16:23–33

From Catena Aurea:

23. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

25. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

26. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

27. For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

28. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix) Again our Lord shews that it is expedient that He should go: And in that day shall ye ask Me nothing.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. ci. 4) The word ask here means not only to seek for, but to ask a question: the Greek word from which it is translated has both meanings.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix) He says, And in that day, i. e. when I shall have risen again, ye shall ask Me nothing, i. e. not say to Me, Shew us the Father, and, Whither goest Thou? since ye will know this by the teaching of the Holy Ghost: or, Ye shall ask Me nothing, i. e. not want Me for a Mediator to obtain your requests, as My name will be enough, if you only call upon that: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you. Wherein He shews His power; that neither seen, or asked, but named only to the Father, He will do miracles. Do not think then, He saith, that because for the future I shall not be with you, that you are therefore forsaken: for My name will be a still greater protection to you than My presence: Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

THEOPHYLACT. For when your prayers shall be fully answered, then will your gladness be greatest.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix) These words being obscure, He adds, These things have I spoken to you in proverbs, but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs: for forty days He talked with them as they were assembled, speaking of the kingdom of God. And now, He says, ye are in too great fear to attend to My words, but then, when you see Me risen again, you will be able to proclaim these things openly.

THEOPHYLACT. (adhuc.) He still cheers them with the promise that help will be given them from above in their temptations: At that day ye shall ask in My Name. And ye will be so in favour with the Father, that ye will no longer need my intervention: And I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you. But that they might not start back from our Lord, as though they were no longer in need of Him, He adds, Because ye have loved Me: as if to say, The Father loves you, because ye have loved Me; when therefore ye fall from My love, ye will straightway fall from the Fathers love.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cii) But does He love us because we love Him; or rather do not we love Him, because He loved us? This is what the Evangelist says, Let us love God, because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19) The Father then loves us, because we love the Son, (Diligamus Deum, Vulg.) it being from the Father and the Son, that we receive the love from the Father and the Son. He loves what He has made; but He would not make in us what He loved, except He loved us in the first place.

HILARY. (vi. de. Trin. c. 31) Perfect faith in the Son, which believes and loves what has come forth from God, and deserveth to be heard and loved for its own sake, this faith confessing the Son of God, born from Him, and sent by Him, needeth not an intercessor with the Father: wherefore it follows, And have believed that I came forth from God. His nativity and advent are signified by, I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. The one is dispensation, the other nature. To have come from the Father, and to have come forth from God, have not the same meaning; because it is one thing to have come forth from God in the relation of Sonship¹, another thing to have come from the Father into this world to accomplish the mystery² of our salvation. Since to come forth from God is to subsist as His Son³, what else can He be but God.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix) As it was consolatory to them to hear of His resurrection, and how He came from God, and went to God, He dwells again and again on these subjects: Again I leave the world, and go to the Father. The one was a proof that their faith in Him was not vain: the other that they would still be under His protection.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cii) He came forth from the Father, because He is of the Father; He came into the world, because He shewed Himself in the body to the world. He left the world by His departure in the body, and went to the Father by the ascension of His humanity, nor yet in respect of the government of His presence, left the world; just as when He went forth from the Father and came into the world, He did so in such wise as not to leave the Father. But our Lord Jesus Christ, we read, was asked questions, and petitioned after His resurrection: for when about to ascend to Heaven He was asked by His disciples when He would restore the kingdom to Israel; when in Heaven He was asked by Stephen, to receive his spirit. And who would dare to say that as mortal He might be asked, as immortal He might not? I think then that when He says, In that day ye shall ask Me nothing, He refers not to the time of His resurrection, but to that time when we shall see Him as He is: which vision is not of this present life, but of the life everlasting, when we shall ask for nothing, ask no questions, because there will remain nothing to be desired, nothing to be learnt.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cii) The word whatsoever, must not be understood to mean any thing, but something which with reference to obtaining the life of blessedness is not nothing. That is not sought in the Saviour's name, which is sought to the hindering of our salvation; for by, in My name, must be understood not the mere sound of the letters or syllables, but that which is rightly and truly signified by that sound. He who holds any notion concerning Christ, which should not be held of the only Son of God, does not ask in His name. But he who thinks rightly of Him, asks in His name, and receives what he asks, if it be not against his eternal salvation: he receives when it is right he should receive; for some things are only denied at present in order to be granted at a more suitable time. Again, the words, He will give it you, only comprehend those benefits which properly appertain to the persons who ask. All saints are heard for themselves, but not for all; for it is not, will give, simply, but, will give you; what follows: Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name, may be understood in two ways: either that they had not asked in His name, because they had not known it as it ought to be known; or, Ye have asked nothing, because with reference to obtaining the thing ye ought to ask for, what ye have asked for is to be counted nothing. That therefore they may ask in His name not for what is nothing, but for the fulness of joy, He adds, Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. This full joy is not carnal, but spiritual joy; and it will be full, when it is so great that nothing can be added to it.

AUGUSTINE. (1. de Trin. c. 8) And this is that full joy, than which nothing can be greater, viz. to enjoy God, the Trinity, in the image of Whom we are made.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cii) Whatsoever then is asked, which appertained to the getting this joy, this must be asked in the name of Christ. For His saints that persevere in asking for it, He will never in His divine mercy disappoint. But whatever is asked beside this is nothing, i. e. not absolutely nothing, but nothing in comparison (computatione) with so great a thing as this. It follows: These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. The hour of which He speaks may be understood of the future life, when we shall see Him, as the Apostle saith, face to face, (1 Cor. 13:12) and, These things have I spoken to you in proverbs, of that which the Apostle saith, Now we see as in a glass darkly. But I will shew you that the Father shall be seen through the Son; For no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him. (Mat. 11:17)

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cii. c. 3) But this sense seems to be interfered with by what follows: At that day ye shall ask in My name. What shall we have to ask for in a future life, when all our desires shall be satisfied? Asking implies the want of something. It remains then that we understand the words of Jesus going to make His disciples spiritual, from being carnal and natural beings. The natural man so understands whatever he hears of God in a bodily sense, as being unable to conceive any other. Wherefore whatever Wisdom saith of the incorporeal, immutable substance are proverbs to him, not that he accounts them proverbs, but understands them as if they were proverbs. But when, become spiritual, he hath begun to discern all things, though in this life he see but in a glass and in part, ye doth he perceive, not by bodily sense, not by idea of the imagination, but by most sure intelligence of the mind, perceive and hold that God is not body, but spirit: the Son sheweth so plainly of the Father, that He who sheweth is seen to be of the same nature with Him who is shewn. Then they who ask, ask in His name, because by the sound of that name they understand nothing but the thing itself which is expressed by that name. These are able to think that our Lord Jesus Christ, in so far as He is man, intercedes with the Father for us, in so far as He is God, hears us together with the Father: which I think is His meaning when He says, And I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you. To understand this, viz. how that the Son does not ask the Father, but Father and Son together hear those who ask, is beyond the reach of any but the spiritual vision.

16:29–33

29. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

30. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

31. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

32. Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix) The disciples were so refreshed with the thought of being in favour with the Father, that they say they are sure He knows all things: His disciples said unto Him, Now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. ciii) But why do they say so, when the hour in which He was to speak without proverbs was yet future, and only promised? Because, our Lord's communications still continuing proverbs to them, they are so far from understanding them, that they do not even understand their not understanding them.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix. 2) But since His answer met what was in their minds, they add, Now we are sure that Thou knowest all things. See how imperfect they yet were, after so many and great things now at last to say, Now we are sure &c. saying it too as if they were conferring a favour. And needest not that any man should ask thee; i. e. Thou knowest what offends us, before we tell Thee, and Thou hast relieved us by saying that the Father loveth us.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. ciii. 2) Why this remark? To one Who knew all things, instead of saying, Thou needest not that any man should ask Thee; it would have been more appropriate to have said, Thou needest not to ask any man: yet we know that both of these were done, viz. that our Lord both asked questions, and was asked. But this is soon explained; for both were for the benefit, not of Himself, but of those whom He asked questions of, or by whom He was asked. He asked questions of men not in order to learn Himself, but to teach them: and in the case of those who asked questions of Him, such questions were necessary to them in order to gain the knowledge they wanted; but they were not necessary to Him to tell Him what that was, because He knew the wish of the enquirer, before the question was put. Thus to know men's thoughts beforehand was no great thing for the Lord, but to the minds of babes it was a great thing: By this we know that Thou camest, forth from God.

HILARY. (vi. de Trin. c. 34) They believe that He came forth from God, because He does the works of God. For whereas our Lord had said both, I came forth from the Father, and, I am come into the world from the Father, they testified no wonder at the latter words, I am come into the world, which they had often heard

before. But their reply shews a belief in and appreciation of the former, I came forth from the Father. And they notice this in their reply: By this we believe that Thou camest forth from God; not adding, and art come into the world, for they knew already that He was sent from God, but had not yet received the doctrine of His eternal generation. That unutterable doctrine they now began to see for the first time in consequence of these words, and therefore reply that He spoke no longer in parables. For God is not born from God after the manner of human birth: His is a coming forth from, rather than a birth from, God. He is one from one; not a portion, not a defection, not a diminution, not a derivation, not a pretension, not a passion, but the birth of living nature from living nature. He is God coming forth from God, not a creature appointed to the name of God; He did not begin to be from nothing, but came forth from an abiding (manente) nature. To come forth, hath the signification of birth, not of beginning.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. ciii) Lastly, He reminds them of their weak tender age in respect of the inner man. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. ciii) For they did not only with their bodies leave His body, when He was taken, but with their minds the faith.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix) Ye shall be scattered; i. e. when I am betrayed, fear shall so possess you, that ye will not be able even to take to flight together. But I shall suffer no harm in consequence: And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. ciii) He wishes to advance them so far as to understand that He had not separated from the Father because He had come forth from the Father.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxix. 2) These things have I said unto you, that ye might have peace: i. e. that ye may not reject Me from your minds. For not only when I am taken shall ye suffer tribulation, but so long as ye are in the world: In the world ye shall have tribulation.

AUGUSTINE. (Tract. ciii. 3) The tribulation of which He speaks was to commence thus, i. e. in every one being scattered to his home, but was not to continue so. For in saying, And leave Me alone, He does not mean this to apply to them in their sufferings after His ascension. They were not to desert Him then, but to abide and have peace in Him. Wherefore He adds, Be of good cheer.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxx) i. e. raise up your spirits again: when the Master is victorious, the disciples should not be dejected; I have overcome the world.

AUGUSTINE. When the Holy Spirit was given them, they were of good cheer, and, in His strength, victorious. For He would not have overcome the world, had the world overcome His members. When He says, These things have I spoken to you, that in Me ye might have peace, He refers not only to what He has just said, but to what He had said all along, either from the time that He first had disciples, or since the supper, when He began this long and wonderful discourse. He declares this to be the object of His whole discourse, viz. that in Him they might have peace. And this peace shall have no end, but is itself the end of every pious action and intention.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

16:23 In That Day You Will Ask Nothing of Me

All Our Longings and Questions Will Be Satisfied.

Augustine: The verb “to ask” used here means not only to entreat but also to question. And the Greek Gospel, of which this is a translation, has a word that may also be understood in both senses, so that by it the ambiguity is not removed. Even if we could remove the ambiguity, it still would not remove every difficulty. For we read that the Lord Christ, after he rose again, was both questioned and petitioned. He was asked by the disciples, on the eve of his ascension into heaven, when he would be manifested and when the kingdom of Israel would come. And even when he was already in heaven, he was petitioned [asked] by Stephen to receive his spirit. And who dares either to think or say that Christ ought not to be asked, sitting as he does in heaven, and yet was asked while he lived here on earth? Or that he ought not to be asked in his state of immortality, although it was our duty to ask him while still in his state of subjection to death?...

For by his going to the Father, they soon would not see him. And for this reason, therefore, his words did not mean that he was about to die and to be withdrawn from their view till his resurrection. But [it meant] that he was about to go to the Father, which he did do after his resurrection when ... after forty days he ascended into heaven. He therefore addressed the words “a little while, and you shall no more see me” to those who saw him at the time in bodily form because he was about to go to the Father and was never thereafter to be seen in that mortal state wherein they now beheld him when he was addressing them at that moment. But the words that he added, “And again a little while, and you shall see me,” he gave as a

promise to the church universal, just as he gave another promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” The Lord is not slow concerning his promises. And so, in a little while, we shall see him, but we will have no further requests to make, no questions to put forward. For nothing shall remain to be desired, nothing will lie hidden that needs to be inquired about. This little while appears long to us, because it is still going on. But when it is over, we shall then feel what a little while it was. So let us not make our joy then be like that of the world. Tractates on the Gospel of John 101.4, 6.

Ask the Father Through Christ.

Origen: And so, when the saints give thanks to God in their prayers, they acknowledge through Christ Jesus the favors he has done. And if it is true that one who is scrupulous about prayer ought not to pray to someone else who prays but rather to the Father whom our Lord Jesus taught us to address in prayers, it is especially true that no prayer should be addressed to the Father without him, who clearly points this out himself when he says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Up till now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” Now he did not say “ask me” or simply “ask the Father.” On the contrary, he said, “If you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name.” For until Jesus taught this, no one asked the Father in the name of the Son. And what Jesus said was true, “Up till now you have asked nothing in my name.” And also true was his saying, “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” On Prayer 15.2.

Ask, and He Will Give.

Cyprian: Let Christ, who dwells within our heart, also dwell in our voice. And since we have him as an advocate with the Father for our sins, let us, when as sinners we petition on behalf of our sins, put forward the words of our advocate. For since he says that “whatever we shall ask of the Father in his name, he will give us,” how much more effectually shall we obtain what we ask in Christ’s name, if we ask for it in his own prayer! The Lord’s Prayer 3.

The Power of the Name.

Chrysostom: He shows the power of his name when—even if it is neither seen nor called on but only named—he even gains our approval with the Father. But when has this taken place? When they said, “Lord, behold their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with boldness and work miracles in your name. And the place was shaken where they were.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 79.1.

16:24 Ask, That Your Joy May Be Full

Enjoying God in the Trinity.

Augustine: Our fullness of joy—and there is nothing greater than this—is to enjoy God in the Trinity, in the image of whom we are made. On the Trinity 1.8.18.

Ask for What Can Satisfy.

Augustine: So what should we pray for? “Ask in my name.” And he did not say what for, but in his words we can understand what we ought to ask for. “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” Ask, and you will receive, in my name. But what? Not nothing. What though? “That your joy may be full,” which means, ask for what can finally satisfy you. Because sometimes you ask for nothing. “Whoever drinks of this water will be thirsty again.” You lower the bucket of greed into the well, you pull up something to drink, and you will again be thirsty. “Ask, so that your joy may be full,” that is, so that you may be permanently satisfied, not just so as to enjoy yourselves for a time. Ask for what can satisfy you. Utter Philip’s words, “Lord, show us the Father, and that suffices us.” The Lord says to you, “Have I been with you such a long time, and you do not know me? Philip, whoever sees me also sees the Father.” So give thanks to Christ who took our humanity to himself for you in your weakness. And get your stomachs ready to be satisfied with Christ’s divinity. Sermon 145.6.

Prayer in Christ’s Name.

Cyril of Alexandria: He urges the disciples to seek for spiritual gifts and at the same time gives them confidence that, if they ask for them, they will not fail to obtain them. He adds the word Amen, that he might confirm their belief that if they ask the Father for anything they would receive it from him. He would act as their mediator and make known their request and, being one with the Father, grant it. For this is what he means by “in my name.” For we cannot draw near to God the Father in any other way than through the Son. For it is by him that we have access in the one Spirit to the Father. It was because of this that he said, “I am the door. I am the way. No one comes to the Father but by me.” For as the Son is God, he being one with the Father provides good things for his sanctified people and is found to be generous of his wealth to us.... Let us then offer our prayers in Christ’s name. For in this way, the Father will most readily consent to them and grant his graces to those who seek them, that receiving them we may rejoice. Commentary on the Gospel of John 11.2.

An Example of Provision for the Halcyon.

Basil the Great: We should give thanks to God for the good things he gives us and not bear it with bad grace because he measures his giving. Should he grant us to be in union with him, this we shall receive as a most perfect and joyful gift. Should he delay this, let us suffer the loss in patience since he disposes of our lives more perfectly than we could ever order them.

The halcyon is a sea bird that nests by the shore, laying its eggs in the sand and bringing forth its young in the middle of winter when the sea beats violent and frequent storms. But during the seven days while the halcyon broods—for it takes but seven days to hatch its young—all winds sink to rest and the sea grows calm. And as it then is in need of food for its young ones, the most bountiful God grants this little creature another seven days of calm so that it may feed its young. Since all sailors know of this, they give this time the name of the halcyon days.

These things are ordered by the providence of God for the creatures that are without reason so that you may be led to seek of God the things you need for your salvation. And when for this small bird he holds back the great and fearful sea and bids it be calm in winter, what will he not do for you made in his own image? And if he should so tenderly cherish the halcyon, how much more will he not give you [what you need] when you call on him with your heart? Sermon 9.5, On Prayer.

16:25 I Will Tell You Plainly of the Father

All Revealed in Due Time.

Cyril of Alexandria: What the time would be, Jesus did not tell them very clearly. We must surmise that he either meant that time when we are enriched with the knowledge that comes to us through the Spirit, whom Christ himself brought down to us after his resurrection from the dead. Or it may be the time to come after the end of the world, in which we shall clearly behold the glory of God, that God will impart to us directly.... In the darkness of the night the bright beauty of the stars shines forth, each casting abroad its own ray of light, but when the sun rises with its own radiant beams ... the luster of the stars waxes feeble and ineffective. In a similar manner I think also that the knowledge we now have will cease, and that which is partial will vanish away at the moment when the perfect light has come on us and sheds forth its radiance, filling us with perfect knowledge of God. Then, when we are enabled to approach God

in confidence, Christ will tell us the things that concern his Father. Commentary on the Gospel of John 11.2.

Blessedness in Seeing God Face to Face.

Augustine: Ask in my name so that your joy may be full and you shall receive. For his saints who persevere in asking for such a good thing as this will never be defrauded by the mercy of God. Then he continues, “These things have I spoken to you in proverbs. But the hour is coming when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of my Father.” The hour of which he speaks may be understood of that future period of life when we shall see him openly, as the apostle said, “face to face.” Thus, when Jesus says, “These things I have spoken to you in proverbs” agrees with what the apostle said, “Now we see as in a glass darkly.” But “I will show you” that the Father shall be seen through the instrumentality of the Son, which is akin to what Jesus says elsewhere, “For no one knows the Father except the Son and the one to whom the Son shall reveal him.” Tractates on the Gospel of John 102.2–3.

16:26 I Do Not Say That I Will Pray the Father for You

Father and Son Both Intercede.

Augustine: But this sense seems to be interfered with by what follows: “At that day you shall ask in my name.” In that future world, when we have reached the kingdom where we shall be like him ... what will we have to ask for when all our desires will already be satisfied with good things? ... Asking implies the lack of something, which can hardly be the case where there will be such an abundance. It remains then that we understand Jesus as having promised to change his disciples from being carnal and natural beings to making them spiritual beings.... The natural person does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God, and so when he hears something about the nature of God, he can conceive of nothing else but some bodily form, however spacious or immense, however lustrous and magnificent, yet still as a body. And so, whatever Wisdom said of the incorporeal, immutable substance are proverbs to him, not that he considers them as proverbs but understands them as if they were proverbs. But when the spiritual person begins to discern all things, ... though in this life he see but through a glass and in part, still he perceives—not through his bodily senses or by an idea of the imagination but by the clearest understanding of the mind—that God is not material but spiritual. This is how the Son shows us so plainly of the Father, that [the Son] who shows is seen to be of the same nature with [the Father] who is shown. Then, those who ask, ask in

his name, because by the sound of that name they understand nothing else than the reality itself that is expressed by that name.... They are able, to a certain extent, to perceive that our Lord Jesus Christ, in so far as he is human, intercedes with the Father on our behalf. But in so far as he is God, they also recognize that he hears [and answers] us together with the Father. This is what I think he means when he says, "And I say not that I will pray the Father for you." To understand this, that is, how the Son does not ask the Father but Father and Son together hear those who ask, is beyond the reach of any but the spiritual vision. Tractates on the Gospel of John 102.3–4.

16:27 The Father Himself Loves You

Love from Love.

Augustine: "For the Father himself," he says, "loves you because you have loved me." Is it the case, then, that he loves because we love or, rather, that we love because he loves? Let this same Evangelist give us the answer out of his own epistle: "We love him," he says, "because he first loved us." This, then, was the efficient cause of our loving, that we were loved. And certainly to love God is the gift of God. He is the one who gave us the grace to love him, who loved while still unloved. Even when we displeased him, we were loved so that there might be that in us whereby we should become pleasing in his sight. For we could not love the Son unless we also loved the Father. The Father loves us because we love the Son, seeing it is of the Father and Son we have received the power to love both the Father and the Son: for love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit of both, by which Spirit we love both the Father and the Son and whom we love along with the Father and the Son. It was God, therefore, who created this religious love of ours whereby we worship God, and he saw that it is good, and for this reason he himself loved what he had made. But he would not have created in us something he could love if it were not for the fact that he loved us before he brought about that something. Tractates on the Gospel of John 102.5.

God As Our Debtor.

Chrysostom: When we ask God for something, there is no need for intermediaries. And he is no more disposed to help us because he is asked by others than if we ourselves ask. For he wants us to seek things from him often. This pleases him very much. For it is in this alone that he becomes our debtor: Every time we pray to him, he is pleased and freely gives us what we have not loaned him. And should he see someone who is in need fervently praying to him, he will himself pay down for us what he has not received

from us. But if we pray in an indifferent manner, he will be indifferent to our request—not because he does not want to give but because our prayer is acceptable only when we pray to him with all our hearts.

Nor does God put off the granting of our prayers because he detests them or because he is against us. But he does clearly wish, by delaying his giving, to keep us close to himself; just as fathers who love their children tenderly will withhold a gift from children who are lazy and indifferent in order to teach them to persevere. And have your prayers been heard? Then give thanks because your prayers have been heard. And have your prayers not been heard? Keep praying so that they may be heard.... For, though you may be helpless and without a protector, if you cry out to God himself you shall most certainly be heard. Poem on Prayer, Homily 2.

16:28 Coming and Going of the Son

First His Generation from the Father, Then His Incarnation.

Hilary of Poitiers: A perfect faith in the Son, which believes and loves the fact that he has come forth from God, has access to the Father without any need of his intervention. The confession that the Son was born and sent from God entitles such a person to a direct audience with God and to love from him. And so the narrative of Jesus' birth and coming must be taken in the strictest and most literal sense. He says, "I went forth from God," conveying the fact that his nature is exactly what was given to him by his birth. For what being other than God could go forth from God, that is, could enter upon existence by being born from him? And then he continues, "And I have come from the Father into this world." In order that he might assure us that this going forth from God means his birth from the Father, he tells us that he came from the Father into the world, referring here to his incarnation. When he said prior to this that he "went forth from God," however, there he was referring to his [birth by] nature. Since he put on record first the fact of his going forth from God, and then his coming from the Father, we cannot say that the going and the coming are the same thing. Coming from the Father and going forth from God are not synonymous. Perhaps we might paraphrase them instead as "birth" and "presence," knowing that they are as different in meaning as these two words. It is one thing to have gone forth from God, entering into a substantial existence [with him] by birth. It is quite another, however, to have come from the Father into this world [by birth] in order to accomplish the mysteries of our salvation. On the Trinity 6.31.

The Father As Cause of Christ's Origin.

John of Damascus: Some of the things said concerning Christ make known the fact of his origin from the Father as cause.... For from him he derives both his being and all that he has. His being was by generative and not by creative means, as, "I came forth, and I have come," and "I live because of the Father." But all that he has is not by free gift or by teaching, but in a causal sense, as "the Son is not able to do anything of himself, unless he sees the Father doing anything." For if the Father does not exist, neither does the Son. For the Son is of the Father and in the Father and with the Father, and not after the Father. In a similar way also what he does is of him and with him. For there is one and the same—not similar but the same—will and energy and power in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Orthodox Faith 4.18.

Christ Is Never Far Away.

Cyril of Alexandria: When Jesus says that he came into this world and again left the world and went to the Father, he does not mean that he either abandoned the Father when he became man or that he abandoned the human race when, in the flesh, he went to the Father. For he is truly God and with his ineffable power fills all things and is not far from anything that exists. Commentary on the Gospel of John 11.2.

He Does Not Abandon His Father or Us.

Augustine: In coming to the world, he came forth in such a sense from the Father that he did not leave the Father behind. And when he leaves the world, he goes to the Father in such a sense that he does not forsake the world. For he came forth from the Father because he is of the Father. And he came into the world in showing to the world his bodily form that he had received from the Virgin. He left the world by a bodily withdrawal, he proceeded to the Father by his ascension as man, but he did not forsake the world in the ruling activity of his presence. Tractates on the Gospel of John 102.6.

The Disciples' Faith in Christ Validated.

Chrysostom: Since his teaching about his resurrection and how he came from God and went to God did not, at the time, cheer them up, he dwells on these subjects again and again. The first was proof that their faith in him was not vain; the second that they would still be under his protection. Homilies on the Gospel of John 79.2.

16:29 Now You Speak Plainly

Disciples Do Not Even Know They Do Not Understand.

Augustine: But how can they say, “Now you speak plainly and do not utter proverbs”? Had the hour, indeed, already come—the hour when he had promised that he would no longer speak to them with proverbs? Certainly such an hour had not yet come, as is shown by how he continues speaking to them. ... They say this then because, although our Lord’s communications to them still continue as proverbs to them, they are so far from understanding them that they do not even understand their own lack of understanding his words. They were still infants who had no spiritual discernment concerning what they heard. Tractates on the Gospel of John 103.1.

16:30 No One Need Question Jesus

Questions for Our Benefit.

Augustine: Why do they say this to someone who knew all things, instead of saying, “you don’t need for anyone to ask you”? It would have been more appropriate to have said, You don’t need to ask anyone. And yet we know that both of these were done, that is, that our Lord both asked questions and was asked. But this is soon explained. For both were for the benefit not of himself but of those whom he asked questions or by whom he was asked. He asked questions of people not in order to learn himself but to teach them. And in the case of those who asked questions of him, such questions were necessary for them in order to gain the knowledge they wanted. But they were not necessary for him to tell him what that was, because he knew what the inquirer wanted before the question was put to him.... And so, to know people’s thoughts beforehand was no great thing for the Lord, but to the minds of babes it was a great thing: “By this we know that you came forth from God.” Tractates on the Gospel of John 103.2.

Works Testify to Origin.

Hilary of Poitiers: They believe that he came forth from God because he does the works of God.... Notice how, on the one hand, they are not at all amazed when he says, “I am come into the world from the Father.” In fact, these are words which they had often heard before. But their reply shows a belief in and appreciation of the previous words when he had said, “I came forth from the Father.” They, in fact, make specific mention of this in their reply: “By this we believe that you came forth from God.” They didn’t add

the phrase, “and are come into the world,” because they knew already that he was sent from God. But they had not yet received anything concerning the doctrine of his eternal generation. That unutterable doctrine they now began to see for the first time in consequence of these words and therefore reply that he spoke no longer in parables. For God is not born from God after the manner of human birth. His is a coming forth from, rather than a birth from God. He is one from one. He is not a portion, not a defection, not a diminution, not a derivation, not a pretension, not a passion. He is the birth of living nature from living nature. He is God coming forth from God, not a creature appointed to the name of God. He did not begin to be from nothing, but he came forth from a nature that has always existed. To come forth has the signification of birth, not of beginning. On the Trinity 6.34–35.

16:31–32 Faith and the Hour of Desertion

Reminder of the Tender Age of the Inner Man.

Augustine: Finally, he reminds them of their weak tender age in respect of the inner man. Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?” Tractates on the Gospel of John 103.2.

Betrayal Foretold.

Chrysostom: He tells them, “You still have a long way to go to reach perfection. Nothing, as of yet, has been achieved by you. In fact, you will soon betray me to my enemies, and you will be so afraid that you will not even be able to flee together. But I will not be harmed because of this.” ... He shows them that now, when they say they believe, they really do not yet believe, nor does he accept their words. Homilies on the Gospel of John 79.2.

Jesus Never Separated from the Father.

Augustine: He replied, “The Father is with me,” so that they would not think that the Son had come forth from the Father in any sense that would lead them to suppose that [the Father] had also withdrawn from his presence. Tractates on the Gospel of John 103.2.

Physical and Spiritual Desertion.

Augustine: But when he was taken, not only did [the disciples] outwardly abandon his bodily presence, but they mentally abandoned their faith. This is what he is talking about when he says, “Do you now

believe?" ... This was as if he had said, Afterward, you will be so confused that you will leave behind even what you now believe. It is apparent that this is indeed what happened because they did fall into such despair and such a death, so to speak, of their old faith. For instance, Cleopas, after Jesus' resurrection, and unaware that he was speaking with Jesus, narrated what had happened to him, saying, "We trusted that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." They left him, in other words, by abandoning the very faith that had formerly believed in him. Tractates on the Gospel of John 103.3.

16:33 In the World You Have Tribulation

In Christ We Are Capable of Eternal Life.

Gregory Thaumaturgus: [Christ] says, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And he said this not as holding before us any contest proper only to God but as showing our own flesh in its capacity to overcome suffering, and death and corruption. Twelve Topics on the Faith 12.

Peace in Not Rejecting Christ.

Chrysostom: "These things have I said to you so that you might have peace," that is, that you may not drive me from your thoughts but receive me. No one should drag these words down into some type of doctrinal argument. They are spoken for our comfort and love. "For," [Jesus might say], "not even when you suffer such things as I have mentioned will your troubles come to an end, but as long as you are in the world you will have sorrow, not only when I am betrayed but also afterward. However, raise up your spirits, for you will suffer no serious harm. When the Master is victorious, the disciples should not be dejected." "And how," tell me, "have you conquered the world?" "I have already said that I have cast down its ruler, but you shall know later when everything yields and obeys you." Homilies on the Gospel of John 79.2.

Tribulation Begins with Scattering.

Augustine: The scattering of everyone to his own home was the beginning of the tribulation.... For in adding, "and you shall leave me alone," he did not mean that they would do this in the subsequent tribulation that they would have to endure in the world after his ascension. They were not going to desert him then. That is when they would abide and have peace in him.... In the tribulation that they encountered after his glorification when they had received the Holy Spirit they did not leave him. Even though they fled

from city to city, they never fled from him. Rather, while they did indeed have tribulation in this world, they made him their refuge so that they would have peace in him, instead of being fugitives from him. When the Holy Spirit was given to them, they were joyful then and victorious in his strength. For he would not have overcome the world if the world had still overcome his members. Tractates on the Gospel of John 103.3.

The Object of the Entire Discourse Is Peace.

Augustine: When he says, "These things have I spoken to you, that in me you might have peace," he refers not only to what he has just said but also to what he had said all along, either from the time that he first had disciples, or since the supper, when he began this long and wonderful discourse.... He declares this to be the object of his whole discourse, that is, that in him they might have peace. And this peace will have no end but is itself the end of every godly action and intention. Tractates on the Gospel of John 104.1.

We Are Not Alone in Our Struggles.

Origen: We are not to suppose that each individual must contend with all these adversaries, which would be impossible for anyone.... For I think that human nature has definite limitations, even though there is a Paul, of whom it is said, "He is a chosen vessel unto me," or a Peter against whom "the gates of hell shall not prevail," or a Moses, "the friend of God." For not even one of these could face the whole crowd of opposing powers at once without destruction to himself, except perhaps on the condition that there was working within him the power of him who said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." ...

I do not think that human nature alone can maintain a contest with angels and with the powers of the "height" and of the "depth" or with "any other creature." But when it feels the presence of the Lord dwelling within it, confidence in the divine help will lead it to say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" On First Principles 3.2.5.

The World Is Only As Strong As Christ Allows.

Origen: We are persecuted when God allows the tempter the power to persecute us. But when God does not want us to suffer this, even in the world that hates us, we wondrously have peace and are of good cheer because of him who said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And truly he has overcome the world, because the world is strong only insofar as its Victor wants it to be. He has received from the

Father the victory over the world. And because of his victory we can indeed be of good cheer. Against Celsus 8.70.

Victory over the World Means to Be with God.

Maximus the Confessor: Rebelling as we do against God through the passions and agreeing to pay tribute in the form of evil to that cunning tyrant and murderer of souls, the devil, we cannot be reconciled with God until we have first begun to fight against the devil with all our strength. For even though we assume the name of faithful Christians, until we have made ourselves the devil's enemies and fight against him, we continue by deliberate choice to serve the shameful passions. And nothing of profit will come to us from our peace in the world, for our soul is in an evil state, rebelling against its own maker and unwilling to be subject to his kingdom. It is still sold into bondage to hordes of savage masters who urge it toward evil and treacherously contrive to make it choose the way that leads to destruction instead of that which brings salvation.

God made us so that we might become "partakers of the divine nature" and sharers in his eternity, and so that we might come to be like him through deification by grace. It is through deification that all things are reconstituted and achieve their permanence. And it is for its sake that what is not is brought into being and given existence. If we desire to belong to God in both name and reality, let us struggle not to betray the Word to the passions. ... To deny the Word is to fail through fear to do what is good. To betray him is deliberately to choose and commit sin. The outcome of every affliction endured for the sake of virtue is joy, the outcome of every labor is rest, and the outcome of every shameful treatment is glory. In short, the outcome of all sufferings for the sake of virtue is to be with God, to remain with him forever and to enjoy eternal rest. Various Texts on Theology, First Century 41–44.