

## 7341 - MEDITATION 10

7593: Meditation 10

Mt 3:1, 2

Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 3:1: When John the Baptizer made his appearance as a preacher in the desert of Judea, this was his theme:

v. 2: Reform your lives! The reign of God is at hand!

v. 3: It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: 'A herald's voice in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'

v. 4: John was clothed in a garment of camel's hair, and wore a leather belt around his waist. Grasshoppers and wild honey were his food.

v. 5: At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him.

v. 6: They were being baptized by him in the Jordan river as they confessed their sins.

7594: 'In those days', 3:1.

- How 'in those days'? For not then, surely, when He was a child and came to Nazareth, but thirty years after, John comes as Luke also testifies. How then is it said: 'In those days'?

7595: The Scripture is always wont to use this manner of speech, not only when it is mentioning what occurs in the time immediately after, but also of things which are to come to pass many year later. Thus also, for example, when His disciples came unto Him as He sat on the Mount of Olives, and sought to learn about His coming, and the taking of Jerusalem [cf. Mt 24:3]: [and yet you know how great is the interval between those several periods]. I mean, that having spoken of the subversion of the mother city, and having completed His discourse on that subject, and being about to pass to that on the consummation, he inserted: Then these things also come to pass. Not bringing together the times by the word *then*, but indicating that time only in which these things were to happen.

7596: And this sort of thing he does now also, saying: 'In those days'. For this is not put to signify the days that come immediately after, but those in which these things were to take place, which he was preparing to relate.

- But why was it after thirty years it may be said that Jesus came to His baptism?

- After this baptism, He was thenceforth to do away with the law: wherefore, even until this age, which admits of all sins, He continues fulfilling it all; that no one might say, that because He Himself could not fulfill it, He did it away. For neither do all passions assail us at all times; but while in the first age of life there is much thoughtlessness and timidity, in that which comes after it, pleasure is more vehement, and after this again, the desire of wealth. For this cause he awaits the fullness of His

adult age, and throughout it all fulfills the law, and so comes to His baptism, adding it as something which follows upon the complete keeping of all other commandments.

7597: To prove that this was to Him the last good work of those enjoined by the law, hear His own words: 'For thus it comes us to fulfill all righteousness' Mt 3:15] Now what He said is like this: We have performed all the duties of the law, we have not transgressed so much as one commandment. Since, therefore, this only remains, this, too, must be added, and so shall we 'fulfill all righteousness.' For He here calls by the name of 'righteousness' the full performance of all the commandments. Now that on this account Christ came to His baptism, is evident.

7598: But wherefore was this baptism devised for Him? For that not of himself did the son of Zaccharias proceed to this, but of God who moved him - this Luke also declares, when he said: Lk 3:2: '... The Word of the Lord came unto John,; that is, His commandment. And he himself too said: Jn 1:33: '... He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said to me, upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending like a dove, and remaining on him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

- Wherefore was he sent to baptize?

- The Baptist again makes this plain to us, saying: Jn 1:31: '...I knew Him not, but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.'

7599: - And if this was the only cause, how does Luke say 3:1 that: He came into the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins? And yet it had not remission, but this gift pertained to the baptism that was given afterwards; for in this 'we are buried with Him', Rm 6:4, ff., and our old man was then crucified with him, and before the cross there does not appear remission anywhere; for everywhere this is imputed to His blood.

7600: And Paul says, 1 Co 6:11: But you are washed, but you are sanctified, not by the baptism of John, but 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God,' Ac 19:4. And elsewhere it says John truly preached a baptism of repentance [he does not say of 'remission'], 'that they should believe in Him that should come after him'. For when the sacrifice was not yet offered, neither had the spirit come down, nor sin was put away, nor the enmity removed, nor the curse destroyed; how was remission to take place?

7601: - What does it mean, then: 'for the remission of sins'?

- The Jews were senseless, and had never any feeling of their own sins, but while they were justly accountable for the worst evil, they were justifying themselves in every respect; and this more than anything caused their destruction, and led them away from the faith. This, for example, Paul himself was laying to their charge when he said that Rm 10: 3: 'they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own, had not submitted themselves into the righteousness of God.' And again: Rm 9:30: 'What shall we say, then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness; but Israel, which followed after the law

of righteousness, has not attained unto the law of righteousness v.32.' Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works , v. 31.

7602: Since therefore this was the cause of their evils, John comes, doing nothing else but bringing them to a sense of their own sins. This, among other things, his very garb declared, being that of repentance and confession. this was indicated also by what he preached, for nothing else did he say, but, brings forth fruits meet for repentance' [cf. Mt 3:8]<sup>27</sup>. Forasmuch the as their not condemning their own sins, as Paul has also explained, made them start off from Christ, while their coming to a sense thereof would set them upon longing to seek after their redeemer, and to desire remission; this John came to bring about, and to persuade them to repent, not in order that they might be punished, but that having become by repentance more humble, and condemning themselves, they might hasten to receive remission.

7603: But let us see how exactly he has expressed it; how, having said, that he 'came preaching the baptism of repentance in the wilderness of Judea', Mt 3:1: added: 'for remission', Lk 3:3; as though he said, For this end he exhorted them to confess and repent of their sins; not that they should be punished, but that they might more easily receive the subsequent remission. For had they not condemned themselves, they could not have sought after His grace: and not seeking, they could not have obtained remission. thus that baptism led the way for this: 'they should believe in Him which should come after him', Ac 19:4, together with that which has been mentioned setting forth this other cause of His baptism.

7604: For neither would it have been as much for him to have gone about to their houses, and to have led Christ around taking Him by the hand, and to have said, 'Believe in this Man', as for that blessed voice to be uttered, and all those other things performed in the presence and sight of all. On account of this He comes to the baptism. Since in fact both the credit of him that was baptizing, and the purport of the thing itself, was attracting the whole city, and calling it unto Jordan; and it became a great spectacle. Therefore he humbles them also when they are come, and persuades them to have no high fancies about themselves; showing them liable to the utmost evils, unless they would repent, and leaving their forefathers, and all vaunting in them, would receive Him that was coming.

7605: Because in fact the things concerning Christ had been up to that time veiled, and many thought He was dead, owing to the massacre which took place at Bethlehem. For though at twelve years old He discover Himself, yet did He also quickly veil Himself again. And for this cause there was need of that splendid exordium and of a loftier beginning. Wherefore also then for the first time he with clear voice proclaims things which the Jews had never heard, neither from prophets, nor from any besides; making mention of Heaven, and of the kingdom there, and no longer saying anything touching the earth. But by the kingdom in this place he means His former and His last advent.

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<sup>27</sup> Fr. Bertoni quotes Lk 3:6 here.

7606: The Kingdom.

- But what is this to the Jews?, one may see, for they know not what you save.'

- Why, for this cause, said he, do I speak, in order that being roused by the obscurity of my words, they may proceed to seek Him, whom I preach. In point of fact, he so excited them with good hopes when they came near, that even many publicans and soldiers inquired what they should do, and how they should direct their own life; which was a sign of being thenceforth set free from all worldly things, and of looking to other objects, and of foreboding things to come. Yes, for all, both the sights and the words of that time, led them unto lofty thoughts.

7607: Conceive, for example, how great a thing it was to see a man after thirty years coming down from the wilderness, being the son of a chief priest, who had never known the common wants of men, and was on every account venerable, and had Isaiah with him. For he, too, was present, proclaiming him, and saying: This is he who I said should come crying, and preaching throughout the whole wilderness with a clear voice. For so great was the earnestness of the prophets touching these things, that not their own Lord only, but him also who was to minister unto Him, they proclaimed a long time beforehand, and they not only mentioned him, but the place too, in which he was to abide, and the manner of the doctrine which he had to teach when he came and the good effect that was produced in him.

7608: See, at least, how both the prophet and the Baptist go upon the same ideas, although not upon the same words.. Thus the Prophet says that he shall come saying: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' [cf. Is 11:3]. And he himself when he was come, said Mt 3:3: 'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance' , which corresponds with: Prepare the way of the Lord. Mt 3:8.

7609: Do you see that both by the words of the prophet and by his own preaching, this one thing is manifested alone; that he was come making a way and preparing beforehand, not bestowing the gift, which was the remission, but ordering in good time the souls of such as should receive the gift of all?

7610: But Luke, 3:5, f. expresses somewhat further: not repeating the exordium, and so passing on, but setting down likewise all the prophecy, saying, Is 40: 4: 'For every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' Do you perceive how the prophet has anticipated all by his words; the concourse of the people, the change of things for the better, the easiness of that which was preached, the first cause of all that was occurring, even if he has expressed it rather as in figure, it being in truth a prophecy which he was uttering?

7611: Thus, when he said; 'Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the rough ways shall be made smooth', he is signifying the exaltation of the lowly, the humiliation of the self-willed, the hardness of the law changed into easiness of faith. For it is no longer toils and labors, he said, but grace, and forgiveness of sins, affording great facility of salvation. Next he states the cause of these things, saying: 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God' Lk 3:6.

7612: No longer Jews and proselytes only, but also all earth and sea, and the whole race of men. Because by 'the crooked things' he signified our whole corrupt life, publicans, harlots, robbers, magicians, as many as having been perverted before, afterwards walked in the right way: much as He Himself likewise said: 'publicans and harlots to into the kingdom of God before you, Mt 21:31, because they believed.

7613: And in other words also again the prophet declared the self-same thing, thus saying, Is 65:25: 'Then wolves and lambs shall feed together.' For like as here by the hills and valleys he meant the incongruities of character are blended into one and the same evenness of self-restraint, so also there, by the characters of the brute animals indicating the different dispositions of men, he again spoke of their being linked in one and the same harmony of godliness. Here also, as before, stating the cause. That cause is, Is 11:10, 'There shall be He that rises to reign over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust' - much as the same as here, too, he said: 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God', and everywhere declaring that the power and knowledge of these our Gospels would be poured out to the ends of the world, converting the human race, from a brutish disposition and a fierce temper to something very gentle and mild.

7614: Mt 3:4: 'And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins'.

Observe how the prophets foretold some things, others they left to the evangelists. Wherefore also Matthew both sets down the prophecies, and adds his own part, not counting even this superfluous, to speak of the dress of the righteous man. For indeed it was a marvelous and strange thing to behold so great austerity in a human frame: which thing also particularly attracted the Jews, seeing in him the great Elijah, and guided by what they then beheld, to the memory of that blessed man; or rather, even to a greater astonishment. For the one indeed was brought up in cities and in houses, the other dwelt entirely in the wilderness from his very swaddling clothes.

7615: For it became the forerunner of Him who was to put away all the ancient ills, the labor, for example, the curse, the sorrow, the sweat; himself also to have certain tokens of such a gift, and to come at once to be above that condemnation. thus he neither ploughed land, nor opened furrow, he ate not his bread by the sweat of his face, but his table was hastily supplied and his clothing more easily furnished than his table, and his lodging yet less troublesome than his clothing.

7616: For he needed neither roof, nor bed, nor table, nor any other of these things, but a kind of angel's life in this our flesh did he exhibit. For this cause his very garment was of camels' hair, that by his dress he might instruct men to separate themselves from all things human, and to have nothing in common with the earth, but to hasten back to their earlier nobleness, wherein Adam was before he wanted garments or robe.

7617: Thus that garb bore tokens of nothing less than a kingdom, and of repentance. And do not say to me:

- Whence had he a garment of hair and a girdle, dwelling as he did in the wilderness? For if you are to make a difficulty of this, you will also inquire into more things besides; how in the winters, and how in the heats of summer, he continued in the wilderness, and this with a delicate body, and at an immature age? how the nature of his infant flesh endured such great inconstancy of weather, and a diet so uncommon, and all the other hardships arising from the wilderness? Where now are the philosophers of the Greeks, who at random and for naught enumerated the shamelessness of the Cynics? For what is the profit of being shut up in a tub and afterwards running into such wantonness? they who encompassed themselves with rings and cups, and men servants and maid servants, and with much pomp besides falling into either extreme.

7618: But this man was not so; but he dwelt in the wilderness as in Heaven, showing forth all strictness of self-restraint. And from thence, like some angel from Heaven, he went down into the cities, being a champion of godliness, and a crowned victor over the world, and a philosopher of that philosophy which is worthy of the heavens. And these things were, when sin was not yet put away, when the law had not yet ceased, when death was not yet bound, when the brazen gages were not yet broken up, but while the ancient polity still was in force. Such is the nature of a noble and thoroughly vigilant soul, for it is everywhere springing forward, and passing beyond the limits set to it; as Paul also did with respect to the New Testament.

7619: - But why, it may be asked, did he use a girdle with his raiment?

- This was customary with them of old time, before men passed into this soft and loose kind of dress. Thus, for instance, both Peter appears to have been 'girded', and Paul, for Ac 21:11 states: the man that owns this girdle. And Elijah, too [cf. 2 K 1:8], was thus arrayed, and every one of the saints, because they were at work continually laboring and busying themselves either in journeyings, or about some other necessary matter; and not for this cause only, but also with a view to trampling under foot all ornaments, and practicing all austerity. This very kind of thing accordingly Christ declares to be the greatest praise of virtue, thus saying: 'What did not go out to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in the houses of kings' Mt 11:8.

7620: But if he, who was so pure, and more glorious than the heaven, and above all prophets, than whom none greater was born, and who had such great boldness of speech, thus exercised himself in austerity, scorning so exceedingly all dissolute delicacy, and training himself to this hard life; what excuse shall we have, who after so great a benefit, and the unnumbered burdens of our sins, do not show forth so much as the least part of his penance, but are drinking and surfeiting, and smelling of perfumes, and in no better trim than the harlot women on the stage, and are by all means softening ourselves, and making ourselves an easy prey to the devil?

7621: Mt 3:5: 'Then went out to him all Judea, and Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan, v. 6 : and were baptized of him, confessing their sins.'

Do you see how great power was in the coming of the prophet? how he stirred up all the people; how he led them to a consideration of their own sins? For it was

indeed worthy of wonder to behold him in human form showing forth such things and using so great freedom of speech, and rising up in condemnation of all as children, and having his great grace beaming out from his countenance. And, moreover, the appearance of prophet after the great interval of time contributed to their amazement, because the gift had failed them, and returned to them after a long time.

7622: And the nature of his preaching too was strange and unusual. For they heard of none of those things to which they were accustomed; such as wars and battles and victories below, and famine and pestilence, and Baylonians and Persians, and the taking of the city, and the other things with which they were familiar, but of Heaven and of the kingdom there, and of the punishment in hell. And it was for this cause, let me add, that although they that committed revolt in the wilderness, those in the company of Judas, and of Theudas [cf. Ac 5:36, f.], had been all of them slain no greater while before, yet they were not the more backward to go out thither. For neither was it for the same objects that he summoned them, as for dominion, or revolt, or revolution; but, in order to lead them by the hand to the kingdom on high. Wherefore neither did he keep them in the wilderness to take them about with him, but baptizing them, and teaching them the rules concerning self-denial, he dismissed them; by all means instructing them to scorn whatever things are on earth, and to raise themselves up to the things to come, and press on every day....<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 10 here in Chrysostom's Homily X on p. 65 b, two full pages early. Fr. Gaspar begins his Meditation 11 with Chrysostom's Homily XI, on p. 67 a of the Baronet translation.

## 7623 - MEDITATION 11

7623: Meditation 11

Mt 3:7

Preparatory Prayer.

Prelude 1. Mt 3:7: When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were stepping forward for this bath, he said to them: 'You brood of vipers! Who told you to flee from the wrath to come?

v. 8: Give some evidence that you mean to reform.

v. 9: Do not pride yourselves on the claim: 'Abraham is our father.' I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these very stones.

v. 10: Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that is not fruitful will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

v. 11: I baptize you in water for the sake of reform, but the one who will follow me is more powerful than I. I am not even fit to carry his sandals. He it is who will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

v. 12: His winnowing-fan is in his hand. He will clear the threshing floor and gather his grain into the barn, but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire.

7624: Mt 3:7: When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were stepping forward for this bath, he said to them: 'You brood of vipers! Who told you to flee from the wrath to come?

- How then does Christ say that they did not believe in John? Mt 11:18; 21:25 [cf. Lk 20:5].

- Because this was not believing, to decline from receiving Him whom he preached; for so they thought they regarded their prophets and their lawgiver, nevertheless He said they had not regarded them, forasmuch as they received not Him that was foretold by them. Jn 5:46: 'For if you had believed Moses', He said, 'you would have believed Me.'

7525: And after this again, being asked by Christ, Mt 21:25: 'The baptism of John, whence is it?' From heaven, or from men? They pondered within themselves and said, v. 26: 'If we shall say: of heaven, he will say to us: How then did you not believe him?' So that from all these things it is manifest that they came indeed and were baptized, yet they did not abide in the belief of that which was preached. For John also points out their wickedness, by their sending unto the Baptist, and saying: Jn 1:21: 'Are you Elias?...are you the Christ? Wherefore, he also added, v. 24: they which were sent were of the Pharisees.'

7626: - What then? were not the multitudes also of this same mind?

- - No, the multitudes in simplicity of mind had this suspicion, but the Pharisees, wishing to lay hold of Him. For since it was acknowledged that Christ comes out of the village of David, and this man was of the tribe of Levi, they laid a snare by the question, in order that if he should say any such thing they might quickly come upon him. this at any rate he has declared by what follows; for on his not acknowledging

any of the things which they expected, even so they take hold of him, saying: Why do you baptize, if you are not the Christ?' Jn 1:25. And to convince you that the Pharisees came with one mind, and the people with another, hear how the evangelist declared this, too.

7627: Saying this of the people: that they came and were baptized of him, confessing their sins [cf. Mt 3:6]; but concerning the Pharisees, no longer like that,

- But that when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, he said: O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Mt 3:7. O greatness of mind! How does he discourse to men ever thirsting after the blood of the prophets, and in disposition no better than serpents! How does he disparage both themselves and their progenitors with all plainness!

7628: - Indeed, said one, he speaks plainly enough, but the question is if there be any reason in this plainness. For he did not see them sinning, but in the act of change; wherefore they did not deserve blame, but rather praise and approbation, for having left city and houses, and making haste to hear his preaching.

7629: What, then, shall we say? That he had not things present, and even now doing, in his view, but he knew the secrets of their mind, God having revealed this. Since then they were priding themselves on their forefathers, and this was like to prove the cause of their destruction, and was casting them into a state of carelessness, he cuts away the roots of their pride. For this cause Isaiah also calls them 'rulers of Sodom' and 'people of Gomorrah', Is 1:10: and another prophet says: 'Are you not as children of the Ethiopians', Am 9:7: and all withdraw them from this way of thinking, bringing them down their pride, which had caused them unnumbered evils.

7630: - But, you will say, the prophets naturally did so; for they saw them sinning: but in this case, with what view and for what cause does he do the same, seeing them obey him?

- To make them yet more tender-hearted.. But if one accurately mark his words, he has also tempered his rebuke with commendation. For he spoke these things, as marveling at them, that they were become able, however late, to do what seemed almost an impossibility for them. His rebuke, you see, is rather that of one bringing them over, and working upon them to arouse themselves. For in that he appears amazed, he implies both their former wickedness to be great, and their conversion marvelous and beyond expectation.

7631: Thus, what has come to pass, he said, that being children of those men, and brought up so badly, they have repented? Whence has come so great a change? Who has softened down the harshness of their spirit? Who corrected that which was incurable? And see how straightway from the beginning he alarmed them, by laying first, for a foundation, his words concerning hell. For he spoke not of the usual topics: 'Who has warned you to flee from wars, from the in-roads of the barbarians, from captivities, from famines, from pestilences?' but concerning another sort of

punishment, never before made manifest to them, he was striking the first preparatory note, saying this: 'Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'

7632: And full well did he likewise call them, 3:7: generation of vipers. 'For that animal, too, is said to destroy the mother that is in travail with her, and eating through her belly, thus to come forth into light; which kind of thing these men also did, being 'murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers' [cf. 1 Tm 1:9] and destroying their instructors with their own hands. However, he stops not at the rebuke, but introduces advice, also:

Mt 3:8: 'Bring forth', he says, 'fruits meet for repentance.' For to flee from wickedness is not enough, but you must show forth also great virtue. For let me not have that contradictory yet ordinary case, that refraining yourselves for a little while, you return unto the same wickedness.

7633: For we are not come for the same objects as the prophets before, No, the things that now are changed, and are more exalted, forasmuch as the Judge henceforth is coming, His very self, the very Lord of the kingdom, leading unto greater self-restraint, calling us to heaven, and drawing us upward to those abodes. For this cause do I unfold the doctrine also touching hell, because both the good things and the painful are forever. Do not therefore abide as you are, neither bring forward the accustomed pleas. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the noble race of your ancestors.

7634: And these things he said, not as forbidding them to say that they were sprung from those holy men, but as forbidding them to put confidence in this, while they were neglecting the virtue of the soul; at once bringing forward publicly what was in their minds, and foretelling things to come. Because after this they are fond to say, Jn 8:33: 'We have Abraham to our father, and were never in bondage to any man.'

7635: Since then it was this, which most of all lifted them up with pride and ruined them, he first puts it down. And see how with his honor paid to the patriarch he combines his correction touching on these things. Namely, having said:

Mt 3:9: 'Think not to say, We have Abraham to our father.' He said not: for the patriarch shall not be able to profit you anything, but somehow in a more gentle and acceptable manner he intimated the self-same thing, by saying: 'For God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.;

Now some say, that concerning the Gentiles he said these things, calling them *stones*, metaphorically; but I say that the expression has also another meaning.

- But of what kind is this?

7636: - Think not, he says, that if you should perish, you would make the patriarch childless. This is not, this is not so. For with God it is possible, both out of stones, to give him men, and to bring them to that relationship; since at the beginning also it was so done. For it was like the birth of men out of stones, when a child came forth from that hardened womb.

7637: This accordingly the prophet was also intimating, when he said, Is 51:1:... Look unto the hard rock, whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence you are

dug: v. 2: look into Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah, that bore you.' Now of this prophecy, you see, he reminds them, showing that if at the beginning he made him a father, as marvelously as if he had made him so out of stones, it was possible for this now also to come to pass. and see how he both alarms them, and cuts them off: in that he said not: 'He had already raised up', lest they should despair of themselves, but that 'He is able out of stones to make men', but what was a much greater thing, 'kinsmen and children of Abraham.'

7638: See how for the time he drew them off from their vain imagination about things of the body, and from their refuge in their forefathers; in order that they might rest the hope of their salvation in their own repentance and continence? So you see how by casting out their carnal relationship, he is bringing in that which is of faith?? Mark then how by what follows also he increase their alarm, and adds intensity to their agonizing fear.

7639: For having said that 'God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham,' 3:9, he added:

3:10: And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees', by all means making his speech alarming. For as he from his way of life had much freedom of speech, so they needed his severe rebuke, having been left barren now for a long time. For why do I say, such are his words, that you are on the point of falling away from your relationship to the patriarch and of seeing others, even those that are of stones, brought in to your pre-eminence? No, not to this point only will your penalty reach, but your punishment will proceed further. 'For now the ax is laid to the root of the tree.' 3:10.

7640: There is nothing more terrible than this turn of his discourse. For it is no longer a flying sickle [cf. Zc 5:1 - LXX], nor the taking down of a hedge, nor the treading under foot of the vineyard [Is 5:5]; but an axe exceeding sharp, and what is worse, it is even at the doors. For inasmuch as they continually disbelieved the prophets, and used to say, 'Where is the day of the Lord?'. and 'let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come that we may know it', Is 5:19, by reason that it was many years before what they said came to pass; to lead them off from this encouragement also, he sets the terrors close to them. And this he declared by saying, 'now' .

7641: and by his putting it to the root. For the space between us is nothing now, he said, but it is laid to the very root. And he said not: to the branches, nor to the fruits, but 'to the root.' Signifying, that if they were negligent, they would have incurable horrors to endure, and not have so much as a hope of remedy. It being no servant who is now come, as those before Him were, but the very Lord of all, bringing on them His fierce and most effectual vengeance.

7642: Yet, though he has terrified them again, he suffers them not to fall into despair; but as before he said not, 'He has raised up', but 'He is able to raise up children to Abraham', at once both alarming and comforting them. Even so here also he did not say that it has touched the root, but 'it is laid to the root, and is now hard by it, and shows signs of no delay.

7643: However, even though He has brought it so near, he makes its cutting depend on you. For if you change and become better men, this ax will depart without doing anything; but if you continue in the same ways, He will tear up the tree by the roots. And therefore, observe, it is neither removed from the root, nor applied as it does it cut at all: the one, that you may not grow supine, the other to let you know that it is possible even in a short time to be changed and saved. Wherefore he does also from all topics heighten their fear, thoroughly awakening and pressing them on to repentance. Thus, first their falling away from their forefathers; next, others being introduced instead; lastly, those terrors being at their doors, the certainty of suffering incurable evils, both which he declared by the root and the ax, was sufficient to rouse thoroughly those even that were very supine and to make them full of anxiety.

7644: I may add that Paul, too was setting forth the same when he said, Rm 9:28: 'A short word will the Lord make upon the whole world.' Be not afraid; or rather, be afraid, but despair not. For you have still a hope of change; the sentence is not quite absolute, neither did the ax come to cut, else what hindered it from cutting, close as it was to the root? But, in purpose by this fear to make you a better man, and to prepare you to bring forth fruit. For this cause, he added:'

'Therefore, every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire', Mt 3:10.

7645: Now, by the word 'every' he rejects again the privilege which they had from their noble descent; Why if you be Abraham's own descendant, said he, if you have thousands of patriarchs to enumerate, you will be undergo a double punishment, abiding unfruitful. By these words he alarmed even publicans, the soldiers' mind was startled by him, not casting them into despair, yet ridding them of all security. For along with the terror, there is also much encouragement in what he said; since by the expression, 'which brings forth not good fruit', he signified that what bears fruit is delivered from all vengeance.

7646: - And how, you might ask, shall we be able to bring forth fruit, when the edge is being applied, and the time is so strait, and the appointed season cut short.

- 'You will be able', he said, 'for this fruit is not of the same kind as that of common tree, waiting a long time, and in bondage to the necessities of season, requiring much other management; but it is enough to be willing, and the tree at once has put forth its fruit. For not the nature of the root only, but also the skill of the husbandman contributes the most to that kind of fruit bearing. For, let me add, on account of this - lest they should say, 'You are alarming, and pressing, and constraining us, applying an ax, and threatening us with being cut down, yet requiring produce n time of punishment - he has added to signify the ease of bearing that fruit.

7647: Mt 3:11: 'In indeed baptize you with water, but He that comes after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose show I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

Implying hereby that consideration only is needed and faith, not labors and toils; and as it is easy to be baptized, so is it easy to be converted, and to become better men.

7648: So having stirred their mind by the fear of god's judgment, and the execution of His punishment, and by the mention of the ax, and by the loss of their ancestors, and by the bringing in of those other children, and by the double vengeance of cutting off and burning, and having by all means softened their hardness, and brought them to desire deliverance from so great evils; then he brings in what he has to say touching Christ; and not simply, but with a declaration of His great superiority. then in setting forth the difference between himself and Him, lest he should seem to say this out of favor, he establishes the fact by comparison of the gifts bestowed by each of them.

7649: For he did not at once say, I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of His show; but when he had first set forth the little value of his own baptism, and had shown that it has nothing more than to lead them to repentance, for he did not say with water of remission, but of repentance, he sets forth Christ's allso, which is full of the unspeakable gift.

7650: Thus, he seems to say, Lest on being told that He comes after me, you should despise Him as having come later; learn the virtue of His gift, and you will clearly know that I uttered nothing worthy nor great, when I said: 'I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe.' So, too, when you are told, 'He is mightier than I', do not think I said this in the way of making a comparison. For I am not worthy to be ranked so much as among His servants, no, not even the lowest of His servants, nor to receive the least honored portion of His ministry.

7651: Therefore, he did not merely say, 'his shoes', but not even 'the latchet,' which kind of office was counted the least of all. Then to hinder your attributing what he had said to humility, he adds the proof from the facts, Mt 3:11:

'For he sahlh baptize you', he said, 'with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

7652: Do you see how great is the wisdom of the Baptist? How, when he himself is preaching, he said everything to alarm, and fill them with anxiety; but when he is sending men to Him, whatever was mild and apt to recover them: not bringing forward the ax, nor the tree that is cut down and burnt, and cast into the fire, nor the wrath to come, but remission of sins, and removing of punishment, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and adoption, and brotherhood, and a partaking of the inheritance, and an abundant supply of the Holy Spirit.

7653: For all these things he obscurely denoted when he said: 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire' and by the specification of fire on the other hand, indicating the vehement and uncontrollable quality of His grace. Imagine only what sort of men it was meet for the hearers to become, when they considered that they were at once to be like the prophets, and like those great ones. For it was on this account, you see, that he made mention at all of fire; that he might lead them to reflect on the memory of those men. Because of all the visions that appeared unto them, I had

almost said, the more part appeared in fire; thus God discoursed with Moses in the bush, thus with all the people in he Mount Sinai, thus with Ezekiel on the cherubim [cf. Ezk 1:27].

7654: And mark again how he rouses the hearer, by putting that first which was to take place after all. For the Lamb was to be slain, and sin to be blotted out, and the enmity to be destroyed, and the burial to take place, and the resurrection, and then the Spirit to come. But none of these things does he mention as yet, but that first which was last, and for the sake of which all the former were done, and which was fittest to proclaim his dignity; so that when the hearer should be told that he was to receive so great a Spirit, he might search with himself, how and in what manner this shall be, while sin so prevails; that finding him full of thought and prepared for that lesson, he might thereupon introduce what he had to say touching the Passion, no man being any more offended, under the expectation of such a gift.

7655: Wherefore, he again cried out, saying: 'Behold the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world', Jn 1:29.

He did not say, 'who remits', but that which implies a more guardian care, 'which bears away'. For it is not all one, simply to remit, and to take it upon Himself. For the one was to be done without peril, the other with death. And again he said: that He is the Son of God[cf. Jn 1:34]. But not even this declared His rank openly to the hearers, for they did not so much as know yet how to conceive of Him as a true Son: but by so great a gift of the Spirit that was also established. therefore the father also in sending John gave him, as you know, this as a first token of the dignity of Him that was come, saying, Jn 1:33: 'Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

7656: Wherefore himself, too, said, ibi, v. 34: ' saw and bare record that this is the Son of God,' as though the one were to all time the clear evidence of the other. Then as having uttered the gentler part of his message, and soothed and relaxed the hearer, he again binds him up, that he may not become remiss. For such was the nature of the Jewish nation; by all encouraging things they were easily puffed up, and corrupted. Wherefore he again adduces his terrors saying, Mt 3:12: 'Whose fan is in his hand'. And he will clear the area.

7657: Thus, as before he had spoken of the punishment, so here he points out the Judge likewise, and introduces the eternal vengeance. 'For He will burn the chaff', he said, 'with unquenchable fire.', ibi.

You see that He is Lord of all things, and that He is Himself the Husbandman; albeit in another place He calls His Father the same. For "My Father", He says, 'is the Husbandman.' Jn 15:1.

7658: Thus, inasmuch as He had spoken of an ax, lest you should suppose that the thing needed labor, and the separation was hard to make; by another comparison he suggests the easiness of it, implying that all the world is His; since He would not punish those who were not His own. For the present, it is true, all are mingled together, for though the wheat appears gleaming through, yet it lies with the chaff, as

on a threshing floor, not as in a garner, but then, great will be the separation. Where now are they by whom hell-fire is disbelieved? Since surely here are two-points laid down, one, that He will baptize with the Holy Spirit, the other, that He will burn up the disobedient.

7659: If then that is credible, so is this, too, assuredly. Yes, this is why the two predictions are put by him in immediate connection, that by that which has taken place already, he might accredit the other, as yet unaccomplished. For Christ too Himself in many places does so, often of the same things, and often of opposites, setting down two prophecies; the one of which He performs here, the other He promises in the future; that such as are too contentious may, from the one which has already come to pass, believe the other also, which is not yet accomplished.

7660: For instance, to them that strip themselves of all that they have for His sake, He promised to give a hundred fold, Mt 19:29 [cf. Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30] and eternal life in that which is to come; by the things already given making the future also credible. Which, as we see, John likewise has done in this place; laying down two things, that He shall both baptize with the Holy Spirit, and burn up with unquenchable fire.

7661: Now, then, if He had not baptized with the Spirit the apostles, and all every day who are willing, you might have doubts concerning those other things, too; but if that which seems to be greater and more difficult, and which transcends all reason, has been done, and is done every day; how do you deny that to be true, which is easy, and comes to pass according to reason?

7662: Thus, having said: 'He shall baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire', and having thence promised great blessings; lest you, released wholly from the former things, grow supine, he has added the fan, and the judgment thereby declared. Thus, 'think not at all', he said, that your baptism suffices, if you become ordinary persons hereafter', for we need both virtue, and plenty of that known self-restraint.

7663: Therefore, as by the ax he urges them unto grace, and unto the font, so after grace he terrifies them by the fan, and the unquenchable fire. And of the one sort, those yet unbaptized, he makes no distinction, but said in general, Lk 3:9: 'Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down' punishing all the unbelievers. Whereas after baptism He works out a kind of division, because many of them that believed would exhibit a life unworthy of their faith.

7664: Let no man, then, become chaff, let no one be tossed to and fro, nor lie exposed to wicked desires, blown about by them easily every way. For if you continue wheat, though temptation be brought on you, you will suffer nothing dreadful; no, for in the threshing floor, the wheels of the car, that are like saws [cf. Is 40:35], do not cut in pieces the wheat; but if you fall away into weakness of chaff, you will both here suffer incurable ills, being smitten of all men, and there you will undergo the eternal punishment. For all such persons both before that furnace became food for the irrational passions here, as chaff is for the brute animals" and there again they are material and food for the flame.

7665: Now to have said directly, that He will judge men's doings, would not so effectually procure acceptance for His doctrine: but to blend with it the parable, and so to establish it all, was more apt to persuade the hearer, and attract him by a more ample encouragement. Wherefore also Christ Himself for the most part so discourses with them; threshing floor and harvest, and vineyard, and wine-press, and field, and net, and fishing, and all things familiar, and among which they were busied He makes ingredients in His discourses. This kind of thing then the Baptist likewise did here, and offered an exceeding great demonstration of his words, the giving of the Spirit. For 'He who has so great power, as both to forgive sins, and to give the Spirit, much more will these things also be within His power, ' so he speaks.

2666: Do you see how in due order the mystery came to be laid as a foundation, before the resurrection and judgment?

- And wherefore, it may be said, did he not mention the signs and wonders which were straightway to be done by him?

- Because this was greater than all, and for its sake all those were done. Thus, in his mention of the chief thing, he comprehended all; death dissolved, sins abolished, the curse blotted out, those long wars done away; our entrance into paradise, our ascent into heaven, our citizenship with the angels, our partaking of the good things to come: for in truth this is the earnest of them all. So that in mentioning this, he has mentioned also the resurrection of our bodies, and the manifestation of His miracles here, and our partaking of His kingdom, and the good things, which 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man', 1 Co 2:9.

7667: For all these things He bestowed on us by that gift. It was therefore superfluous to speak of the signs that were immediately to ensue, and which sight can judge of; but those we meet to be discoursed on, whereof they doubted; as for instance, that He is the Son of God; that He exceeds John beyond comparison; that He 'bears' the sin of the world'; that He will require an account of all that we do; that our interests are not limited to the present, but elsewhere every one will undergo the due penalty. For these things were not as yet provable by sight...<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For Fr. Bertoni, this is among his longest Meditations so far, except for meditation 4, cf. above pp. 17-23. However, Fr. Gaspar ends his Meditation 11 on what is p. 73 a of the Baronet translation. Chrysostom's Homily XI ends on p. 75 b, near the top, of the said translation.

## 7668 - MEDITATION 12

7668: Meditation 12  
Mt 3:13

Preparatory Prayer.

Prelude 1. Mt 3:13: Later Jesus, coming from Galilee, appeared before John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

v. 14: John tried to refuse him with the protest, 'I should be baptized by you, yet you come to me!'

v. 15: Jesus answered; 'Give in for now. We must do this if we would fulfill all of God's demands.' So, John gave in.

v. 16: After Jesus was baptized, he came directly out of the water. Suddenly the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over him.

v. 17: With that a voice from the heavens said, 'This is my beloved Son. My favor rests on him.'

7569: Later Jesus, coming from Galilee, appeared before John at the Jordan to be baptized by him

With the servants the Lord, with the criminals, the Judge, comes to be baptized. But, be not troubled; for in these humiliations, His exaltation does most shine forth. For He who vouchsafed to be borne so long in a Virgin's womb, and to come forth thence with our nature, and to suffer all the rest which He suffered, why do you marvel if He also chose to be baptized, and to come with the rest to His servant? For the amazement lay in that one thing, that being God, He would be made Man; but the rest after this all follows in course of reason.

7670: For this cause, let me add, John also by way of anticipation said all that he had said before that he 'was not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe'; and all the rest, as for instance, that He is Judge, and rewards every man according to his desert, and that He will bestow His Spirit abundantly on all; in order that when you should see Him coming to the baptism, you might not suspect anything mean. Therefore he forbids Him, even when he was come, saying:

7671: 'I have need to be baptized of You, and You come to me'? - For because the baptism was 'of repentance' and led men to accuse themselves for their offenses, lest any one should suppose that He to 'comes to the Jordan' in this sort of mind. John sets it right beforehand, by calling Him both Lam and Redeemer, from all the sin that is in the world.

7672: Since He was able to take away the sins of the whole race of men, much more was He Himself without sin. For this cause then he said not: Behold, He that is without sin, but what was much more, He 'that bears away the sin of the world' in order that together with this truth you might receive that other with all assurance, and having received it might perceive that in the conduct of some further economy, He comes to

the baptism. Wherefore also he said to Him when He came, 'I have need to be baptized of You, and You come to me?' 3:14. And he did not say, And aare you baptized of me? for this he feared to say: but what, And You come to me?

7673: What then does Christ do? What he did afterwards with respect to Peter, Jn 13:6, ff., this did He then also. For so too he would have forbidden Him to wash his feet, but when he had heard, 'What I do you do not know now, but you shall know hereafter', and 'you have no part with me', he speedily withdrew from his determination and went over to the contrary.

7674: And this man again in like manner when he heard:

Mt 3:15: Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness,' straightway obeyed. <sup>30</sup>

And mark how He urges him on that very ground which chiefly caused him to look doubtfully on what was taking place; in that He did not say: thus it is just, but 'thus it becomes us'. For inasmuch as the point unworthy of Him was in his mind chiefly this, His being baptized by His servant, He stated this rather than anything else, which is directly opposed to that impression: as though He had said, Is it not as unbecoming that you avoid and forbid this? For this very cause I bid you suffer it, that is becoming, and that in the highest degree. And He did not merely say: 'suffer', but He added 'now'. For it will not be so forever, He said, but you shall see me such as you desire; for the present, however, endure this. Next He shows how this 'becomes' Him.

7675: - How, then, is this so?

- In that we fulfill the whole Law, and to express this He said, 'all righteousness.' For righteousness is the fulfilling of the commandments. Since then we have performed all the rest of the commandments, He said, and this alone remains, it also must be added:

7676: Because I am come to do away with the curse that is appointed for the transgression of the law: I must therefore first fulfill it all, and having delivered you from its condemnation, in this way bring it to an end. It becomes me, therefore, to fulfill the whole law, by the same rule that it becomes me to do away the curse that is written against you in the law: this being the very purpose of my assuming flesh, and coming hither.

7677: Mt 3:15: Then he suffered Him. v. 16: And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he I saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting on Him.'

For inasmuch as many supposed that John was greater than He, because John had been brought up all his time in the wilderness, and was son of a chief priest, and was clothed with such raiment, and was calling all men unto his baptism, and had been born of a barren mother; while Jesus, first of all, was, was of a damsel of ordinary rank, for the virgin birth was not yet manifest to all; and besides, he had been

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<sup>30</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips a sentence here in which Chrysostom states that all made it their study to obey Him in all things.

brought up in a house and held converse with all men, and wore this common raiment; they suspected Him to be less than John, knowing as yet nothing of those secret things.

7678: And it fell out moreover that He was baptized of John, which thing added support to this surmise, even if none of those mentioned before had existed; for it would come into their mind that this man was one of the many, for were He not one of the many, He would not have come with the many to the baptism, but that John was greater than He and far more admirable: - in order therefore that this opinion might not prevail over the multitude,

The very heavens are opened, when He is baptized, and the Spirit comes down, and a voice with the Spirit, proclaiming the dignity of the Only Begotten. And lo, the voice from the heavens, saying: 3:16.

7679: For since the voice that said: 'this is My beloved Son' would seem to the multitude to belong to John, for It added not, This that is baptized, but simply, *This*, and every hearer would conceive it to be said concerning the baptizer, rather than the baptized, partly on account of the Baptist's own dignity, partly for all that has been mentioned; the Spirit came in the form of a dove, drawing the voice towards Jesus, and making it evident to all, that *This* was not spoken of John that baptized, but of Jesus who was baptized.

7680: - And how was it, one may ask, that they did not believe when these things came to pass?

- Because in the days of Moses also many wonderful works were done, albeit not such as these; and after all those, the voices, and the trumpets, and the lightnings, they both forged a calf and were 'joined unto Baal-peor'. And those very persons, too, who were present at the time, and saw Lazarus arise, so far from believing in Him, who had wrought these things, repeatedly attempted even to slay Him.

7681: Now if seeing before their eyes one rise from the dead, they were so wicked, why marvel at their not receiving a voice wafted from above? Since when a soul is uncandid and perverse, and possessed by the disease of envy, it yields to none of these things; even as when it is candid it receives all with faith, and has not great need of these.

7682: Speak not therefore thus: They believed not, but rather inquire, Did not all things take place which ought to have made them believe? For by the prophet also God frames this kind of defense of His own ways in general. that is, the Jews being on the point of ruin and of being given over to extreme punishment; lest any from the wickedness should calumniate His providence, He said, Is 5:4: 'What ought I have done to this vineyard that I have not done?' Just so here likewise you should reflect; what ought to have been done and was not done? And indeed whensoever arguments arise on God's Providence, do make use of this kind of defense, against those who from the wickedness of the many try to raise a prejudice against it.

7683: See, for instance, what astonishing things are done, preludes of those which were to come; for it is no more paradise, but Heaven that is opened. But let our argument with the Jews stand over unto some other time; for the present, God working with us, we would direct our discourse to what is immediately before us.

'And Jesus when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo! the heavens were opened unto Him' [cf. Mt 3:16].

- Wherefore were the heavens opened?

- To inform you that at your baptism also this is done, God calling you to your country on high, and persuading you to have nothing to do with earth.

7684: And if you do not see, do not doubt it. For so evermore at the beginnings of all wonderful and spiritual transactions, sensible visions appear, and such like signs, for the sake of them that are somewhat dull in disposition, and who have need of outward sight, and who cannot at all conceive an incorporeal nature, but are excited only by the things that are seen: that so, though afterward no such thing occur, what has been declared by them once for all at the first may be received by your faith. For in the case of the apostles, too, there was a 'sound of a mighty wind' and visions of fiery tongues appeared, Ac 2:1, ff., but not for the apostles' sake, but because of the Jews who were then present.

7685: Nevertheless, even though no sensible signs take place, we receive the things that have been once manifested by them. Since the dove itself at that time, therefore, appeared, that as in place of a finger, so to say, it might point out to them that are present, and to John, the Son of God.. Not however, merely on this account, but to teach you also, that upon you no less at your baptism the Spirit comes. But since then we have no need of sensible vision, faith sufficing instead of all. For signs are 'not for them that believe, but for them that believe not, 1 Co 14:22.

7686: - But why in the fashion of a dove?

- Gentle is that creature and pure. Forasmuch, then, as the Spirit, too, is 'a Spirit of meekness' [cf. Ga 6:1], Here, therefore, appear in this sort. And besides, He is reminding us of an ancient history. For so, when once a common shipwreck had overtaken the whole world, and our race was in danger of perishing, this creature appeared, and indicated the deliverance from the tempest, and bearing an olive branch [cf. Gn 8], published the good tidings of the common calm of the whole world.

7687: All of this was a type of the things to come. For in fact, the condition of men was then much worse, and they deserved a much sorer punishment. To prevent your despairing, therefore, He reminds you of that history. Because then also, when things were desperate, there was a sort of deliverance and reformation; but then by punishment, now, on the contrary, by grace and an unspeakable gift [cf. 2 Co 9:15].

7688: Therefore, the dove also appears, not bearing an olive branch, but pointing out to us our Deliverer from all evils, and suggesting the gracious hopes. For not from out of an ark does she lead one man only, but the whole world she leads up into heaven at her appearing, and instead of a branch of peace from an olive, she conveys the adoption to all the world's offspring in common. Reflect now on the greatness of the

gift, and do not account His dignity the less for His appearing in such a likeness. For I actually hear some saying that such as is the difference between a man and a dove, so great is that between Christ and the Spirit; since the one appeared in our nature, the other in the likeness of a dove.

7689: - What must we say then to these things?

- that the son of God did indeed take upon Him the nature of man, but the Spirit took not on Him the nature of a dove. Therefore, the evangelist also said not: in the nature of a dove, but 'in the form of a dove.'. Accordingly, never after did He so much as appear in this fashion, but at that moment only. And if on this account you affirm His dignity to be less, the cherubim too will be made out by this reasoning much His superior, even as much so as an eagle is to a dove: because they too were figured into that visible shape. And the angels too superior again, for they no less have many times appeared in the fashion of men.

7690: But, these things are not so, indeed they are not. For the truth of an economy is one thing, and the condescension of a temporary vision another. Do not now, I pray you, become unthankful towards your Benefactor, nor with the very contraries requite Him that has bestowed on you the fountain of blessedness. For were adoption is vouchsafed, there is also the removing of evils, and the giving of all good things. On this very account, Jewish baptism ceases, and ours takes its beginning.

7691: And what was done with regard to the Passover, the same ensues in the baptism also. For as in that case, too, He acting with a view to both, brought the one to an end, but to the other, He gave a beginning: so here, having fulfilled the Jewish baptism, He at the same time opens also the doors of that of the Church; as on one table, then, so in one river now, He had both sketched out the shadow and now adds the truth. For this baptism alone has the grace of the Spirit, but that of John was destitute of this gift.

7692: For this very cause in the case of the others that were baptized no such thing came to pass, but only in the instance of Him who was to hand on this; in order that, besides what we have said, you might learn this also that not the purity of the baptizer, but the power of the baptized, had this effect. Not until then, assuredly, were either the heavens opened, nor did the Spirit make His appearance. Because henceforth He leads us away from the old to the new polity, both opening to us the gates on high, and sending down His Spirit, from thence to call us to our country there; and not merely to call us, but also with the greatest mark of dignity. For He has not made us angels and archangels, but He has caused us to become 'sons of God' and 'beloved' and so He draws us on towards that portion of ours.

7693: Having, then, all this in your mind, you should show forth a life worthy of the love of him who calls on you, and of your citizenship in that world, and of the honor that is given to you. Crucified as you are to the world, and having crucified it to yourself, show yourself with all strictness a citizen of the city of the heavens. And do not, because your body is not translated unto heaven, suppose that you have anything to do with the earth; for you have your Head abiding above. Yes, with this very

purpose the Lord, having first come here and having brought His angels, did then, taking you with Him, depart thither: that even before your going up to that place, you might understand that it is possible for you to inhabit the earth as it were heaven.

7694: Let us, then, keep watch over that noble birth, which we received from the beginning; and let us every day seek more and more the palaces there, and account all that is here to be a shadow and a dream. For so, had any king among those on earth, finding you poor and a beggar, made you suddenly his son, never would you have thought upon your cottage, and your cottage's mean appointments. Yet surely in that case the difference is not much.

7695: Do not, then, either in this case take account of any of the former things, for you are called to much greater. For both He who calls is the Lord of the angels, and the good things that are given surpass all both word and thought. Since not from earth to earth does He remove you, as the king does, but from earth to heaven, and from a mortal nature to an immortal, and to glory unspeakable, then only possible to be properly manifested, when we shall actually enjoy it...<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> With this eschatological perspective, Fr. Bertoni cuts short Chrysostom's Homily XII on p. 78 b of the Baronet translation. Fr. Gaspar begins His Meditation 13 on p. 80 of the said translation, Chrysostom's Homily XIII.

## 7696 - MEDITATION 13

7696: Meditation 13  
Mt 4:1-11

Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 4:1: Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.

v. 2: He fasted forty days and forty nights and afterward was hungry.

v. 3: The tempter approached and said to him: 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to turn into bread.'

v. 4: Jesus replied: 'Scripture has it: Not on bread alone is man to live, but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God.'

v. 5: Next the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the parapet of the temple,

v. 6: and said: If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. Scripture has it: 'He will bid his angels take care of you; with their hands they will support you that you may never stumble on a stone.'

v. 7: Jesus answered him; 'Scripture also has it: You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'

v. 8: The devil then took him up a very high mountain and displayed before him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, promising,

v. 9: All these will I bestow on you if you prostrate in homage before me'

v. 10: At this, Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! Scripture has it: You shall do homage to the Lord your God; him alone you shall adore.

v. 11: At that the devil left him, and angels came and waited on him.

7697: Mt 4:1: Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.

- Then, what?

- After the descent of the Spirit, after the voice that was borne from above, and said: 'this is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased', 3:17. And what was marvelous, it was of the Holy Spirit; for this, he here said, led Him up. For since with a view to our instruction, He both did and underwent all things; he endures also to be led up thither, and to wrestle against the devil: in order that each of those who are baptized, if after his baptism he have to endure greater temptations, may not be troubled as if the result were unexpected, but may continue to endure all nobly, as though it were happening in the natural course of things.

7698: For this cause, neither does God hinder the temptations as they come in, first to teach you that you are become much stronger; next, that you may continue modest, neither be exalted even by the greatness of your gifts, the temptations having power to repress you; moreover, in order that that wicked demon, who is for a while doubtful about your desertion of him, by the touchstone of temptations may be well assured that you have utterly forsaken and fallen from him; fourthly, that you may in this way be made stronger, and better tempered than any steel; fifthly that you may obtain a clear

demonstration of the treasures entrusted to you. For the devil would not have assailed you unless he had seen you brought to greater honor.

7699: Hence, for example, from the beginning he attacked Adam, because he saw him in the enjoyment of great dignity. For this reason, he arrayed himself against Job, because he saw him crowned and proclaimed by the God of all.

- How then does He say, Mt 26:41: 'Pray that you enter not into temptation?'

- For this cause he does not show you Jesus simply going up, but 'led up' according to the principle of the Economy; signifying obscurely by this that we ought not of ourselves to leap upon it, but being dragged thereto, to stand manfully.

7700: And consider whither the Spirit led Him up, when He had taken Him; not into a city and forum, but into a wilderness. that is, he being minded to attract the devil, gives him a handle not only by His hunger, but also by the place. For then most especially does the devil assail, when he sees men left alone, and by themselves. Thus did he also set upon the woman in the beginning, having caught her alone, and found her apart from her husband. Just as when he sees us with others and banded together, he is not equally confident, and makes no attack. Wherefore we have the greatest need on this very account to be flocking together continually, that we may not be open to the devil's attacks.

7701: Having then found Him in the wilderness, and in a pathless wilderness, or that the wilderness was such, Mark has declared, saying Mk 1:13, that He 'was with the wild beasts', behold with how much craft he draws near, and wickedness; and for what sort of opportunity he watches. For not in his fast, but in his hunger he approaches Him; to instruct you how great a good fasting is, and how it is a most powerful shield against the devil, and that after the fast, men should give themselves up, not to luxury and drunkenness, and a full table, but to fasting. For, for this cause even He fasted, not as needing it Himself, but to instruct us. Thus, since our sins before the fast were brought in by serving the belly.

7702: Much as if anyone who had made a sick man whole were to forbid his doing those things, from which the distemper arose; so we see here likewise that He Himself after the fast brought in fasting. For indeed both Adam by the incontinence of the belly was cast out of paradise; and the flood in Noah's time, this produced; and this brought down the thunders on Sodom. For although there was also a charge of whoredom, nevertheless from this grew the root of each of those punishments; which Ezekiel also signified when he said, Ezk 16:49: 'But this was the iniquity of Sodom, that she waxed wanton in pride and in fullness of bread, and in abundance of luxury.'

7703: Thus the Jews also perpetrated the greatest wickedness, being driven upon transgression by their drunkenness and delicacy [cf. Is 5:11, f.]. On this account then, even He, too, fasts forty days, pointing out to us the medicines of our salvation; yet proceeds no further, lest on the other hand, through the exceeding greatness of the miracle the truth of His economy should be discredited. For as it is, this cannot be, seeing that both Moses and Elias, anticipating Him, could advance to so great a length of time, strengthened by the power of God. And if He had proceeded farther,

from this among other things His assumption of our flesh would have seemed incredible to many.

7704: Mt 4:2: Having then fasted forty days and as many nights, He was afterwards hungered'. This afforded him a point to lay hold of and approach, that by actual conflict, He might show how to prevail and be victorious. Just so do wrestlers also: when teaching their pupils how to prevail and overcome, they voluntarily in the lists engage with others, to afford these in the persons of their antagonists the means of seeing and learning the mode of conquest. Which same thing then also took place. For it being His will to draw him on so far, He both made His hunger known to him, and awaited his approach, and as He waited for him, so He dashed him to earth, once, twice, and three times, with such ease as became Him.

7705: But that we may not, by hurrying over these victories, mar your profit, let us begin from the first assault, and examine each with exact care.. thus, after He was hungered, it is said:

Mt 4:3: The tempter came and said to Him: If you are the Son of God, command these stones be made bread.'

7706: For because he had heard a voice borne from above, and saying: 'This is My beloved Son', 3:17 and he heard also John bearing so large witness concerning Him, and after that saw Him hungry; he was thenceforth in perplexity, and neither could believe that He was a mere man, because of the things spoken concerning Him; nor on the other hand receive it that He was Son of God, seeing Him as he did in hunger.

7707: Whence being in perplexity he utters ambiguous sounds. And much as when coming to Adam at the beginning, he feigns things that are not, that he may learn the things that are; even so here also, not knowing clearly the unutterable mystery of the Economy, and who He may be that is come, he attempts to weave other nets, whereby he thought to know that which was hidden and obscure. And what does he say?

7708: 'If You are the Son of God, command these stones be made bread.' 4:3.

He does not say, because you are hungry, but, 'if You be the Son of God', thinking to cheat Him with his compliments. Wherefore also he was silent touching the hunger, that he might not seem to be alleging it, and upbraiding Him. For not knowing the greatness of the Economy which was going on, he supposed this to be a reproach to Him. Wherefore flattering Him craftily, he makes mention of His dignity only.

7709: When, then, does Christ say? To put down his pride, and to signify that there was nothing shameful in what had happened, nor unbecoming His wisdom that which the other had passed over in silence to flatter Him, he brings forward and sets it forth, saying:

Mt 4:4: Who, responding said: It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone.. So that He begins with the necessity of the belly. But mark, I pray you, the craft of that wicked demon, and whence he begins his wrestlings, and how he does not forget his

proper art. For, by what means he cast out also the first man, and encompassed him with thousands of other evils, with the same means here likewise he weaves his deceit; I mean, with incontinence of the belly.

7710: So, too, even now one may hear many foolish ones say their bad words by thousands because of the belly. But, Christ, to show that the virtuous man is not compelled by this tyranny to do anything that is unseemly, first hungers, then submits not to what is enjoined Him; teaching us to obey the devil in nothing. thus, because the first man did hereby both offend God, and transgress the law, as much and more does He teach you - though it be no transgression which he commands, not even so to obey.

7711: And why do I say 'transgression'? Why, even though something expedient be suggested by the devils, do not. says He, even so give heed unto them. Thus, for instance, He stopped the mouths of those devils also, proclaiming Him Son of God, Mk 1:34. And Paul, too, again, Ac 16:16, ff. rebuked them crying this self-same thing; and yet what they said was profitable; but he more abundantly dishonoring them, and obstructing their plot against us, drove them away even when doctrines of salvation were preached by them. closing up their mouths, and bidding them be silent.

7712: And therefore neither in this instance did He consent to what was said. But what did He say?

'Man shall not live by bread alone.' Mt 4:4.

Now His meaning is like this: God is able even by word to nourish the hungry man; bringing him a testimony out of the ancient Scripture, and teaching us, though we hunger, indeed, whatever we suffer, never to fall away from our Lord.

7713: But if a man say, still He should have displayed Himself; I would ask him with what intent, and for what reason? For not at all that he might believe did the other so speak, but that he might, as he thought, over argue Him into unbelief. Since the first of mankind were in this way beguiled and over-argued by him, not putting earnest faith in God. For the contrary of what God had said he promised them, and puffed them up with vain hopes, and brought them to unbelief, and so cast them out of the blessings they actually possessed.

7714: But Christ signifies Himself not to have consented, either to him, then, or afterwards to the Jews, his partisans, in their demand of signs: invariably instructing us, whatever we may have power to do, yet to do nothing vainly and at random; nor even when want urges to obey the devil.

7715: What then does the accursed one do? Overcome and unable to persuade Him to do his bidding, and that when pressed by such violent hunger, he proceeds to another thing saying:

Mt 4:5: Next the devil too Him...etc., v. 6: and said to Him: 'If You be Son of God, cast Yourself down; for it is written: He shall give His angels charge concerning You, and in their hands they shall bear You up.'

7716: - What can the reason be, that at each temptation He adds this: 'If You be the Son of God.'

- Much the same as he did in that former case, he does also at this time. that is, as he then slandered God, saying: Gn 3:5: 'In the day that you eat, your eyes shall be opened'; thereby intending to signify, that they were beguiled and over-reached, and had received no benefit; even so in this case also he insinuates this same thing, saying: 'In vain God has called You Son, and has beguiled You by his gift; for if this be not so, afford us some clear proof that You are of that power. Then, because Christ had reasoned with him from Scripture, he also brings in a testimony of the prophet.

7717: How then does Christ respond? He is not indignant, nor provoked, but with that extreme gentleness He reasons with him again from the Scriptures, saying:

Mt 4:7: 'And He said to him: Again it is written: 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'.

- He is teaching us that we must overcome the devil, not by miracles, but by forbearance and long-suffering, and that we should do nothing at all for display and vainglory.

7718: But mark his folly, even by the very testimony which he produced. For while the testimonies cited by the Lord were both of them spoken with exceeding fitness: his, on the other hand, were chance and random sayings, neither did he bring forward on his part that which applied to the matter in hand. 'For that it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning You', is not advice to dash and toss one's self down head-long; and moreover, this was not so much as spoken concerning the Lord. However, this for the time He did not expose, although there was both insult in his manner of speech, and great inconsistency.

7719: For of God's Son no man requires these things: but to cast one's self down is the part of the devil, and of demons. Whereas God's part is to raise up even them that are down. And if He ought to have displayed His own power, it would not have been by casting and tossing Himself down at random, but by saving others. But to cast ourselves down precipices, and into pits, pertain properly to his troop.

7720: Thus, for example, the seducer among them is active everywhere. But Christ even when these things are said, does not yet reveal Himself, but as man for a while discourses with him. For the sayings, 'Man shall not live by bread alone', and 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God', suited one not greatly revealing Himself, by representing Himself as one of the many. But do not marvel if he is reasoning with Christ oftentimes turns himself about. For as pugilists when they have received deadly blows, reel about, drenched in much blood and blinded; even so he, too, darkened by the first and second blow, speaks at random what comes uppermost: and proceeds to his third assault.

7721: MT 4:8: 'And he leads Him up into a high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, v. 9 and says to Him: All this things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.. v. 10: Then Jesus said to him: Get behind

me Satan, for it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only will you serve'.

For since he was now come to sinning against the Father, saying that all that is the Father's was his, and was endeavoring to make himself out to be God, as artificer of the universe; He then rebuked him but not even then with vehemence, but simply: 'Get you away, Satan', which itself had in it something of a command rather than of rebuke. For as soon as He had said to him, 'Begone', He caused him to take to flight; since he brought not against Him any other temptations.

7722: - And how, says Luke that 'he ended all temptation'? [cf. Lk 4:3].

- To me it seems that in mentioning the chief of the temptations, he had spoken of all, as though the rest were included in these. For the things that form the substance of innumerable evils are these: to be a slave to the belly, to do anything for vainglory, to be in subjection to the madness of riches. Which accordingly that accursed one considering, set last the most powerful of all, I mean the desire of more: and though originally, and from the beginning, he was travailing to come to this, yet he kept it for the last, as being of more force than the rest. For in fact this is the manner of his wrestling, to apply those things last, which seem more likely to overthrow. And this sort of thing he did with respect to Job likewise. Wherefore, in this instance, too, having begun with the motives which seem to be viler and weaker, he goes on to the more prevailing.

7723: - How then are we to get the better of him?

- In the way which Christ has taught us by fleeing to God for refuge; and neither to be depressed in famine, as believing in God who is able to feed even with a word; nor amidst whatever good things we may receive to tempt Him who gave them, but to be content with the glory which is from above, making no account of that which is of men, and on every occasion to despise what is beyond our need. For nothing does so make us fall under the power of the devil, as longing for more, and loving covetousness. And this we may see even by what is done now. For now also there are those who say: All these things will we give you, if you will fall down and worship. e are indeed men by nature, but have become his instruments. Since at that time, too, he approached Him, not by himself only, but also by others. which Luke also was declaring when he said, that Lk 4:13: he departed from Him for a season, showing that hereafter he approached Him by his proper instruments.

7724: Mt 4:11: 'Then the devil left Him and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.'

For when the assault was going on, He suffered them not to appear, that He might not thereby drive away the prey; but after He had convicted him in all points, and caused him to take to flight, then they appear: that you also may learn, that after your victories which are copied from His, angels will receive you, also, applauding you, and waiting as guards on you in all things. thus, for example, angels take Lazarus away with them, after the furnace of poverty and of famine and of all distress. For as I have already aid, Christ on this occasion exhibits many things, which we ourselves are to enjoy.

7725: Forasmuch then as all these things have been done for you, do you emulate and imitate His victory. And should any one approach you of those who are that evil spirit's servants, and savor the things that be of him, upbraiding you and saying, If you are marvelous and great, remove the mountain; be not troubled, nor confounded, but answer with meekness and say some such thing as you have heard the Lord say: You shall not tempt the Lord your God. Or should he, offering glory and dominion, and an endless amount of wealth, enjoin you to worship him, stand again manfully. For neither did the devil deal so with the common Lord of us all only, but every day also he bring these his machinations to bear on each of His servants, not in mountains only and in wildernesses, nor by himself: but in cities, likewise, in market-places, and in courts of justice, and by mean of our own kindred, even men.

- What then must we do?

- Disbelieve him altogether, and stoop our ears against him, and hate him when he flatters, and when he proffers more, then so much the more shun him...<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 13 on p. 83 b of the Baronet translation of Chrysostom's Homily 13 - which does not end until p. 86 b.

## 7726 - MEDITATION 14

**7726:** Meditation 14

Mt 4:12-25

Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 4:12: When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.

v. 13: He left Nazareth and went down to live in Capernaum by the sea by the sea near the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,

v. 14: to fulfill what had been said through Isaiah the prophet:

v. 15: 'Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali along the sea beyond the Jordan, heathen Galilee:

v. 16: A people living in darkness has seen a great light. On those who inhabit a land overshadowed by death, light has arisen.'

v. 17: From that time on Jesus began to proclaim this theme: 'Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

v. 18: As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee he watched two brothers, Simon now known as Peter, and his brother, Andrew, casting a net into the sea. They were fishermen.

v. 19: He said to them: 'Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.'

v. 20: They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers.

v. 21: He walked along further and caught sight of two other brothers, James, Zebedee's son, and his brother John. They too were in their boat getting their nets in order with their father, Zebedee.

v. 22: He called them, and immediately they abandoned boat and father to follow him.

v. 23: Jesus toured all of Galilee. He taught in their synagogues, proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and cured the people of every disease and illness.

v. 24: As a consequence of this, his reputation traveled the length of Syria. They carried to him all those afflicted with various diseases and racked with pain: the possessed, the lunatics, the paralyzed. He cured them all.

v. 25: The great crowds that followed him came from Galilee, the Ten Cities, Jerusalem and Judea, and from across the Jordan.

**7727:** Mt 4:12: When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew to Galilee.

- Whereof did He depart?

- Again instructing us not to go to meet temptations, but to give place and withdraw ourselves. For it is no reproach, the not casting one's self into danger, but the failing to stand manfully when fallen into it. To teach us this accordingly, and to soothe the envy of the Jews, He retires to Capernaum; at once fulfilling the prophecy [cf. Is 9:1, 2], and making haste to catch the teachers of the world: for they, as you know, were abiding there, following their craft.

7728: Mt 4:13: He left Nazareth and went down to live in Capernaum by the sea near the territory in Zebulun and Naphtali, v. 14: to fulfill what had been said through Isaiah the prophet.

But, mark, I pray you, how in every case when He is about to depart unto the Gentiles, He has the occasion given Him by the Jews. For so in this instance, by plotting against His forerunner, and casting him into prison, they thrust out Christ into the Galilee of the Gentiles. For to show that He neither speaks of the Jewish nation by a part of it, nor signifies obscurely all the tribes; mark how the Prophet distinguishes that place, saying,

Mt 4:15: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea,' beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, v. 16: 'the people which sat in darkness, saw great light,' by darkness here not meaning that which is sensible, but men's errors and ungodliness. Wherefore, he also added, 'They which sat in the region and shadow of death, to them light is sprung up.'

7729: For that you might learn that neither the light nor the darkness which he speaks of are sensible, in discoursing of the light, he called it not merely light, but 'a great light', which elsewhere he expresses by the word, 'True' Lk 1:9, and in describing the darkness, he termed it 'the shadow of death.' Lk 1:79. Then implying that they did not of themselves seek and find, but that God showed Himself to them from above, he said to them, 'Light is sprung up', that is the light of itself sprang up and shone forth: it was not that they first ran to the light. For in truth the condition of men was at the worst before Christ's coming. Since they more than 'walked in darkness'; they 'sat in darkness'; a kind of sign that they did not even hope to be delivered. For as persons not even knowing where to put a step forward, so they sat, overtaken by the darkness, not being able so much as to stand any more.

7730: Mt 4:17: 'From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

'From that time' - What time?

- After John was cast into prison.

- And wherefore did He not reach to them from the beginning? Indeed what occasion for John at all, when the witness of His works was proclaiming Him?

- That hence also you might learn His dignity; namely, that as the Fathers, so He too has prophets; to which purpose Zaccharias also spoke, Lk 1:76: 'And you child, shall be called a prophet of the Most High.' And that he might leave no occasion to the shameless Jews; which motive He Himself alleged, saying, Mt 11:18: 'John ... came neither eating, nor drinking, and they say, he has a devil; v. 19: The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.'

7731: And moreover it was necessary, that what concerned Him should be spoken by another first, and not by Himself. For if even after both testimonies and demonstration so many and so great, they said, Jn 8:13: You bear record of yourself, Your record is not true - had He, without John's saying anything, come into the midst, and first borne record of Himself; what would they not have said? For this cause, neither did He preach before John, nor did He work miracles, until John was cast into prison; lest in

this way the multitude should be divided. Therefore also John did no miracle at all; that by this means also might give over the multitude to Jesus, His miracles drawing them unto Him.

7732: Again, if even after so many divine precautions, John's disciples, both before and after his imprisonment, were jealously disposed towards Him Jn 3:16, and the people, too, suspected not Him but John to be the Christ Mt 16:14; what would not the result have been, had none of these things taken place? For this cause, both Matthew distinctly notes that 'from that time He began to preach'; and when He began His preaching, He Himself also taught this same doctrine, which the other used to preach; and no word as yet concerning Himself does the doctrine which he preached say. Because it was for the time a great event even for this to be received, forasmuch as they had not as yet the proper opinion about Him.

7733: Therefore, also at the beginning, He puts nothing severe or grievous, as the other did, mentioning an ax, and a tree cut down; and a threshing-floor, and unquenchable fire; but His preludes are gracious: the Heavens and the kingdom there are the good tidings which he declares to His hearers.

Mt 4:18: 'And walking by the sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, that was surnamed Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they left their nets and followed Him

7734: - And yet John said that they were called in another manner, Jn 1:35, ff..

- Whence it is evident that this was a second call; and from many things one can perceive this. For there it is said, that he came to him, when 'John was not yet cast into prison'; but here, after he was in confinement. And there Andrew calls Peter, but here Jesus calls both. And John said, 1:42, Jesus seeing Simon coming, said, 'You are Simon, the Son of Jona, you shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.' But Matthew said that he was already called by that name; for his words are: '<sup>33</sup>. And from the place where they were called, and from many other things, one may perceive this; and from their ready obedience and abandonment of all. For now they were well instructed beforehand.

7735: Thus, in the other case, Andrew is seen coming into His house, and hearing many things; but here, having heard one bare word, they followed immediately. Since neither was it unnatural to follow Him at the beginning, and then leave Him again and return anew to their own craft, when they saw both John thrown into prison, and Himself departing. Accordingly you see that He finds them actually fishing. But He neither forbade them at the first when minded to withdraw, nor having withdrawn themselves, did He let them go altogether; but He gave way when they started aside from Him, and comes again to win them back; which kind of thing is the great point of fishing.

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<sup>33</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni skips a sentence which Chrysostom included, in which he refers to Mt's rendition of Peter's call, on p. 88 a of the Baronet translation.

7736: But, mark both their faith, and their obedience. For though they were in the midst of their work [and you know how greedy a thing fishing is] when they heard His command, they delayed not, they procrastinated not, they aid not, 'let us return home, and converse with our kinsfolk', but 'they forsook all and followed', even as Elisha did to Elijah [cf. I K 19:20, 21]. Because such is the obedience which Christ seeks of us, as that we delay not even a moment of time, though something absolutely most needful should vehemently press on us. Wherefore also when some other had come unto Him, and was asking leave to bury his father, not eve this did he permit him to do, My 8:21, ff.: to signify that before all we ought to esteem the following of Himself.

7737: But if you should say, the promise is very great'; even for this do I most admire hem, for that when they had not as yet seen any sign, they believed in so great a reach of promise, and accounted all but second to that attendance. And this because they believed that by what words they were caught, by the same they would be able to catch others, also. To these, then, such was His promise: but to James and John He said no such thing. For the obedience of those that had gone before had by this time paved the way for these. And besides they had also heard many things before concerning Him.

7738: And see how he does with exact care intimate unto us their poverty also: in that He found them sewing up their nets. So exceeding great was their poverty, that they were mending what was worn out, not being able to buy others. And this, too, was for the time no small proof of virtue, their bearing poverty with ease, their supporting themselves by honest labor, their being bound one to another by the power of love, their having their father with them, and attending upon them.

When, therefore, He had caught them, then He begins in their presence to work miracles, by his deeds confirming the words of John concerning Him. And He was continually frequenting their synagogues, even by this instructing them that He was not a sort of adversary of God and deceiver, but that He was come in accordance with the Father.

7739: And while frequenting them, He did not preach only, but also showed forth miracles, Mt 4:23: 'And Jesus toured all of Galilee. He taught in their synagogues, proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and cured the people of every disease and illness.'

And this, because on every occasion, whensoever anything is done strange and surprising, and any polity is introduced, God is wont to work miracles, as pledges of His power, which He affords to them that are to receive his laws. thus, for instance, when He was about to make man, he crated a whole world, and then gave him that law which he had in Paradise. And when He was to give laws to Noah, He showed forth anew great miracles, in that He reduced again the whole creation to its elements, and made that fearful sea to prevail for a full year; and in that amid o great a tempest, He preserved that righteous man.

7740: And in the time of Abraham, too, He vouchsafed many signs; as his victory in the war, the plague upon Pharaoh, his deliverance from dangers. And when about to

legislate for the Jews, He showed forth those marvelous and great prodigies, and then gave the law.

Just so in this case also, being to introduce a certain high polity, and to tell them what they had never heard, by the display of the miracles He confirms what He said. Thus, because the kingdom He was preaching appeared not, by the things that appear, He makes it, though invisible, manifest.

7741: And mark the evangelist's care to avoid superfluity of words; how he tells us not of every one of them that are healed, but in a few words speeds over showers of miracles. For he says:

Mt 4:24: 'They brought unto Him all that were sick with divers diseases, and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and He healed them.'

But our inquiry is this; why it can have been that He demanded faith of none of them? For He said not, what we find Him saying after this: 'Do you believe that I am able to do this ?' Because He had not as yet given proof of His power. And besides, the very act of approaching Him, and of bringing others to Him, exhibited no common faith. For they brought them even from far; whereas they would never have brought them, unless they had persuaded themselves of great things concerning Him.

Now, then, let us follow Him for we also have many diseases of our soul...<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 14 right here, on p. 89 a of the Baronet translation - with another full page and a half of Chrysostom's Homily 14 to go, which ends on p. 90 b of the said translation.