

vain to the marrow of his bones. Therefore when He said, *what went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?* This is what He said: *Did you go out to see a man who was empty of the knowledge of God, and responsive to the breath of every unclean spirit?* For He spoke to them in a spirit of approval rather than reproach; wishing to affirm that they had not seen anything in John that was empty or fickle.

*Bodies corrupted by lust are the dwelling places of devils... But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments: behold that they are clothed in soft garments are in the house of kings.* By garments are mystically signified the body which the soul as it were puts on, and which grows soft through luxury and wantonness. In *kings* we have a name for the fallen angels. For those are the powers of the world, lording it over men. Those dressed in luxurious garments are in the house of kings means that those whose bodies are lax and dissolute through wantonness are habitations of the demons, who choose such dwelling-places as being suited to their designs and evil works.

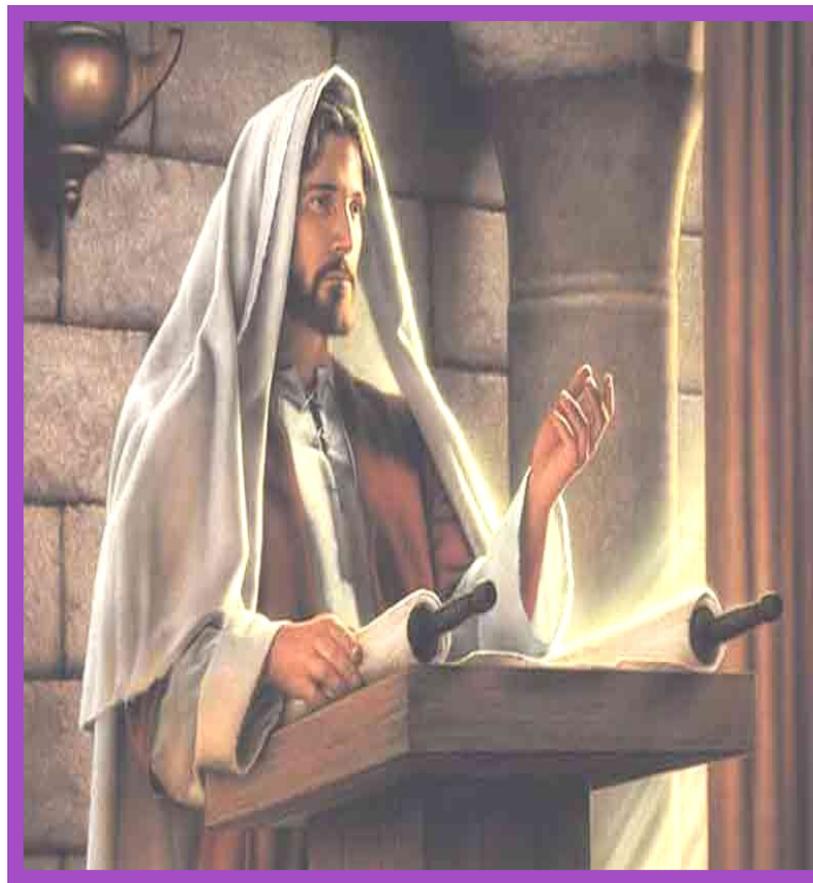


*The glory of John... But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yea, and more than a prophet.* The Lord makes plain to all the greatness of John, declaring him to be more than a prophet, because only to him was it given both to foretell the Coming of Christ and to behold Him. How then shall it be believed that he knew not Christ, who was sent with the power of an angel to make ready for His Coming, and than whom no greater prophet born of woman had arisen; excepting that he is less than Him Who was questioned by the disciples of John, Who was not believed, to Whom not even His works gave testimony. He is greater in the Kingdom of Heaven.



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## **SERMON ON JOHN THE BAPTIST AND CHRIST'S WORKS FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH # 125 - 1**



**JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!**

**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

## Based on the Divine Office-Douay-Rheims Version

Volume 1 - Pages 1076 (1962 edition)

Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 11: 2-10

by: Saint Hilary, Bishop and Doctor

*Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ: sending two of his disciples, he said to Him. Art thou He that is to come or look we for another? Did John in his prison not know the Lord? Did so great a prophet know not his God? But as Precursor he had foretold that He was to come; as Prophet he had recognized Him standing in their midst; as Confessor he had venerated Him before men. Did error creep into so profound and varied knowledge? The subsequent testimony of the Lord concerning John does not permit us to think so. Nor can we believe that the light of the Holy Spirit was denied him in prison, when the Light of that same Power was to be given to the imprisoned apostles.*

*Why John sent to Christ... A clearer understanding is furnished from the things John did, and from the efficacy of the action the grace that was in him is evident. For as Prophet he prophesied by the very circumstances of his imprisonment; because in him the Law became silent. For the Law had foretold Christ, and the forgiveness of sin, and had promised men the kingdom of heaven. John had continued and brought to a close this purpose of the Law. The Law was now silenced, imprisoned by the wickedness of men, and as it were held in bonds, lest Christ become known, because John has been fettered and imprisoned. The Law therefore sends messengers to behold the works of the Gospel, so that unbelief may contemplate the truth of the faith in the light of these wonders; so that whatever in the Law is frustrated by the violence of sinful men, may be set free by an understanding of *the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free* (Gal. iv. 31).*

In this manner John remedied not his own but his disciples' ignorance. For he had himself proclaimed that Christ was to come unto the forgiveness of sin. But that his disciples might learn that he had preached none other than Christ, he sends them to Him that they may behold His works, so that the works of Christ may confirm his own teaching, and, finally: so that they might look for no other Christ than He to whom the works gave testimony.

*The Scandal of the Cross is Foretold... When the Lord had revealed Himself in wonders, namely: in the blind seeing, the lame walking, in lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing, the dumb speaking, in the dead rising again, and in the preaching of the gospel to the poor, He says: *blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me*. Was there anything in what Christ had done which might scandalize John? Far from it. For in the whole course of his mission and teaching he had had nothing to say opposed to Him.*

The force and significance of the preceding sentence must be carefully dwelt on; on that, namely, which is preached to the poor; that is, they who have laid down their lives, who have taken up the cross and followed after, who have become humble in spirit, for these a kingdom is prepared in heaven. Therefore, because this universality of suffering was to be fulfilled in Christ Himself, and because His Cross would become a stumbling-block to many (I Cor. i. 23), He now declares that they are blessed to whom His Cross, His death, and Burial, will offer no trial of faith. So He makes clear that of which already, earlier, John has himself warned them, saying that blessed are they in whom there would be nothing of scandal concerning Himself. For it was through fear of this that John had sent his disciples, so that they might see and hear Christ.

*Whom does the reed signify... Lest however this saying should be referred to John, as if something in Christ had scandalized him, *the disciples going away*, Our Lord said to the crowd concerning John: *What went you out to the desert to see; a reed shaken by the wind?* Mystically, the desert must be considered as a place empty of the Holy Spirit, in which there is no dwelling place of God. The *reed* must be taken as meaning a man such as is wholly absorbed in the glory of this world, and in the emptiness of his own life; within he is without fruit of truth, he has a pleasing exterior, but no interior; responsive to the breath of every wind, that is, to the suggestions of unclean spirits, unable ever to stand firm, and*