

Jesus appears to the disciples by William Hole

having to render an account of them. Because of this you must treat them with honor. If you insult them, then neither will your own affairs prosper... If he is held in honor by you, he will be able to take care of what relates to yourselves... Remember what Christ said of the Jews: *The Scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses* (Mt. xxiii. 2, 3). Now we can say that the priests are seated not upon the chair of Moses, but upon the chair of Christ. For it is from Him they have received their teaching; for as Paul says: *For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God*

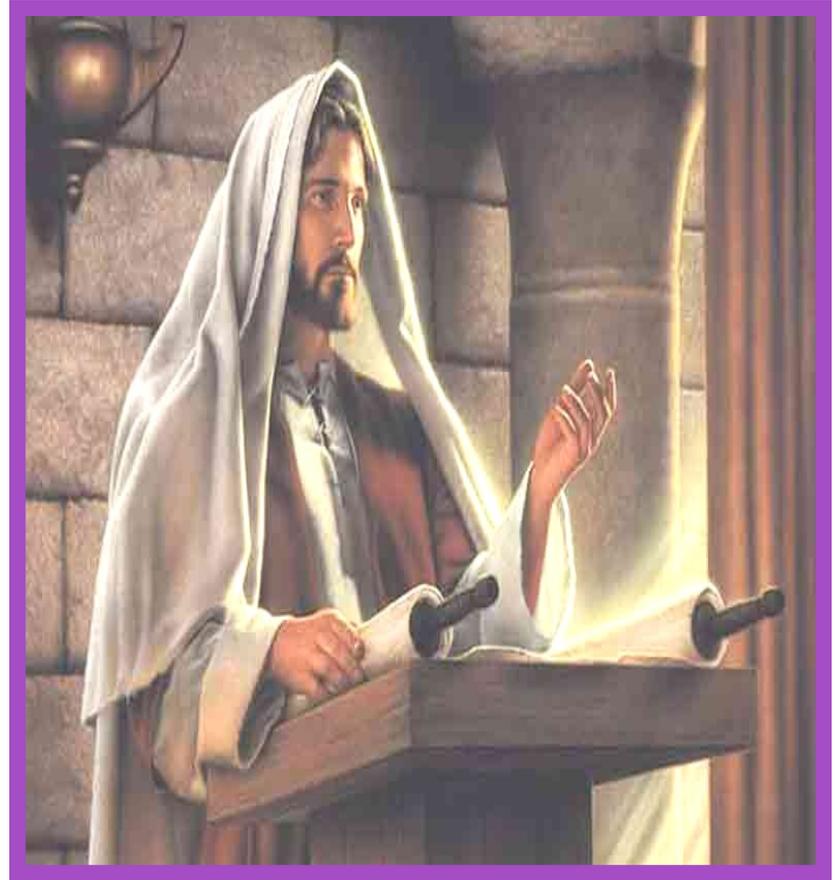
as it were exhorting by us (II Cor. v. 20)...

Why do I say a priest and not an angel nor archangel? Only a priest can do anything in regard to what is given us by God. It is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Who disposes of all things: the priest but lends his tongue, and puts forth his hand... Keeping all these things before our mind, let us both fear God and hold His priests in reverence. Show them every respect through our worthy manner of living and because of our obedience to them so that we may receive from God a great reward... Amen.



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**SERMON ON
THE AUTHORITY AND DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH
150 - 2**



JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!

LOW SUNDAY

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Commentary on the Gospel of John 20: 19-31

by: Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor

...Why did Jesus appear to them in the evening? Was it because they would be more fearful? But the wonder is why they did not think He was a phantom. He came suddenly, and while the doors were shut... He presented Himself clearly and with a mild countenance. He had not come by day, so that they might all be gathered together... all at once He stood among them and showed them His hands and His side, and His voice calmed their troubled minds as He said to them: *Peace be to you*; that is: Be not troubled; recalling what He had said to them just before His Crucifixion: *Peace I leave with you*, and also, *In Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress* (Jn. xiv. 27). *The Disciples were glad when they see the Lord*. His words are now truly fulfilled! All this wrought in them a more exact faith. Since they were engaged in deadly warfare with the Jews, He repeats frequently the words: *Peace be to you*; bestowing this grace to comfort them in the war...

His own suffering ended, He recounts the fruits of the Cross, and restoring all things to their right order, He says to them: *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you*. Here Jesus states that by His own authority, He bestows on them the power for them to take up His work: *For He breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained...* so Christ sending them forth gave them this power.

Why then does He say, *If I go not, He (the Comforter) will not come to you* (Jn. xvi. 7)? Some say that He did not give them the Spirit, but disposed them for receiving it by breathing on them. Jesus prepares them to receive the Holy Ghost by saying to them: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost...* They received some spiritual power and grace so as to forgive sins. The gifts of the Spirit are manifold and He goes on: *Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*, indicating what kind of power He

was bestowing. Later however, after fifty days, they received the power of miracles. Accordingly He says: *You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall witness unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea*. They became witnesses through signs and wonders; for ineffable the grace of the spirit, and manifold His gift.

This has come to pass that you may learn that One is the Authority and the Gift of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How is it that, *no man comes to the Son, except the Father draw Him?* (Jn. vi. 44). This is shown to be also the property of the Son; for He says: *I am the way: No man cometh to the Father but by me* (Jn. xiv. 6). We see also how the same belongs to the Holy Ghost; for *No man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost* (I Cor. xii. 3). Again we see that the Apostles are said to be given to the Church, now by the Father, now by the Son, and now by the Holy Ghost; and that the *diversities of grace* belong equally to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

Let us then do all things that we may have the Spirit of God within us. Let us treat with reverence those to whose hands the work of the Spirit has been entrusted. For great is the dignity of the priesthood. *Whose sins you shall forgive*, He says, *they are forgiven*; and because of this Paul says: *Obey your prelate, and be subject to them* (Heb. xiii. 7), and hold them in great reverence. For you have but the care of what concerns yourself; and if you look well after that you will not be held accountable for what others do. But the priest, even should he order his own life in a fitting manner, yet does not scrupulously have due care for both your life, and the lives of those about him, shall go with the wicked into everlasting fire; and so he oftentimes while not failing in his own conduct will perish because of yours, if he has not done all that belonged to him to do.

Knowing the greatness of the danger, Paul goes on to say: *They watch for your souls*; and not simply this, but as