THE FIRST INSTRUCTION ADDRESSED TO THOSE ABOUT TO BE BAPTIZED

St. John Chrysostom

THE CATECHUMEN IS INVITED TO THE SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

1. This is a time for joy and gladness of the spirit. Behold, the days of our longing and love, the days of your spiritual marriage, are close at hand. To call what takes place today a marriage would be no blunder; not only could we call it a marriage but even a marvelous and most unusual kind of military enlistment. Nor does any contradiction exist between marriage and military service. That no one may think there does, let him listen to the blessed Paul, the universal teacher, who has used both these similes. In one place he said: I betrothed you to one spouse, that I might present you a chaste virgin to Christ. In another text he spoke as one arming soldiers about to go forth into battle and said: Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 〈Did you see how St. Paul uses both similes in the same context?〉

2. 〈Truly〉 today there is joy in heaven and on earth. For if there is such joy at one sinner who repents, 〈how much greater is the joy among angels and archangels and all the powers above,〉 as well as among all the creatures of earth, when they see so vast a throng suddenly scorning the devil's snares and earnestly desiring to be enrolled in the flock of Christ.

3. Come, then, let me talk to you as I would speak to a bride about to be led into the holy nuptial chamber. Let me give you, too, a glimpse of the Bridegroom's exceeding wealth and of the ineffable kindness which He shows to His bride. Let me point out to her the sordid past from which she is escaping and the glorious future she is about to enjoy. And if you wish, let us first strip from her her garb and see the condition in which she is. Despite her plight, the Bridegroom still allows her to come to Him. This clearly shows us the boundless kindness of our common Master. He does not have her come to Him as His bride because He has longed for her comeliness, or her beauty, or the bloom of her body. On the contrary, the bride He has brought into the nuptial chamber is deformed and ugly, thoroughly and shamefully sordid, and, practically, wallowing in the very mire of her sins.

4. But let no one who hears these words of mine, fall into a crass and carnal interpretation of them. I am talking of the soul and its salvation. When the blessed Paul, that loftiest of souls, said: I have betrothed you to one spouse, that I might present you a chaste virgin to Christ, he merely meant that he espoused to Christ as chaste virgins those souls which had made progress toward piety.

5. Now that we have an exact understanding of this point, let us ascertain clearly how deformed the bride previously was, and then we will marvel at the Master's kindness. What could be more ugly than that soul which has abandoned its proper dignity, forgotten its noble birth from on high, made a display of worshiping idols of stone and wood, brute animals, and things less worthy of honor than these—a soul which has increased its ugliness by the smell of burning fat, the filth of blood, and the smoke of sacrifice? For from such sources as these soon arise the tinsel-trimmed parade of pleasures, the carousals, the drunkenness, the licentiousness, and all the disgraceful pursuits which bring joy to the demons whom they serve.

6. But when the good Master saw His bride in such a plight and swept down into what I might call the very abyss of wickedness, naked and unseemly, He considered neither her ugliness, nor her utter poverty, nor the enormity of her evils, but He manifested His own surpassing kindness and received her into His presence. Such is the disposition He reveals when He says through the prophet: Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty.

7. See how, from the very outset, He reveals the goodness which is His, deigning to call by the name of daughter one who was so rebellious and had given herself over to unclean demons. Not only that, but consider too that He demands no accounting for her offenses, nor does He exact judgment, but only counsels and urges her to hear and accept His exhortation and remonstrance, and He encourages her to forget the past.

8. Did you see His ineffable kindness? Did you see His bountiful care? When the blessed David spoke those words, he addressed them to the whole world in its sorry plight; now it is opportune for us to proclaim them to those who have yearned for the yoke of Christ, and who have run to this spiritual enlistment; now is the time to lift my voice and say to each of you here present, changing slightly the words of the prophet, "You who are the new soldiers of Christ, forget all the past, forget your wicked ways. Hear and incline your ears and receive this, the best of admonitions." David said: Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house.

9. You see that today we give to your loving assembly the same exhortation which the prophet gave to the whole world. For in saying Forget your people, he meant idolatry, error, and the worship of demons; and thy father's house, that is, forget your former behavior, which led you into this shame. Forget all those things and cast from your minds anything which is calculated to bring back the past. For if you will only do this, if you will keep aloof from your people and your father's house, that is, from the old corruption and the evil in which you were consumed and in which you wasted the bloom of your soul together with that of your body, the king will greatly desire your beauty.

10. You see, beloved, that my discourse concerns the soul. For a physical ugliness of the body could never change into beauty; the Master has prescribed that nature be subject neither to motion nor change. But in the case of the soul, such change is easy and very simple. Why is this and how is it possible? With the soul, it is entirely a matter of free choice rather than of a nature subject to necessity. Therefore, if a deformed and extremely ugly soul has suddenly willed to do so, it can change itself, it can ascend to the summit of beauty and again become comely and graceful; if it again grows careless, it can again be swept down into the utmost ugliness. The king, therefore, shall greatly desire thy beauty, if you will forget the past, your people, as the prophet says, and your father's house.

MARRIAGE IS A GREAT MYSTERY

11. Did you see the goodness of the Master? It was not then in vain nor without reason that, at the beginning of my discourse, I called what takes place here a spiritual marriage. For in the case of that marriage which can be seen by bodily eyes, it is altogether impossible that the bride be united to a husband, unless she has forgotten her parents and those who reared her, and unless she has given over her will, whole and entire, to him who will be joined to her as her bridegroom. Hence, the blessed Paul, in treating of marriage, called it a mystery. For after he had said: For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, he pondered on the strength of this bond, and cried out in amazement: This is a great mystery!

12. Yes, for it is truly great. What human reckoning will be able to grasp the nature of what takes place in marriage when one considers that the young wife, who has been nourished with her mother's milk, and kept at home, and judged worthy of such careful upbringing, suddenly, in a single moment, when she comes to the hour of marriage, forgets her mother's labor pains and all her other care, forgets her family life, the bonds of love, and, in a word, forgets everything, and gives over her whole will to that man whom she never saw before that night? Her life is so completely changed that thereafter that man is everything to her; she holds him to be her father, her mother, her husband, and every relative one could mention. No longer does she remember those who took care of her for so many years. So intimate is the union of these two that thereafter they are not two but one.

13. Adam, the first-formed man, with prophetic eyes foresaw this very thing and said: She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of her man. Wherefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. The same thing could be said of the husband, because he too has forgotten his parents and his father's house to unite himself and cleave to the wife who on that night is joined to him. Furthermore, to point out the closeness of this union, the Holy Scripture did not say: He shall be united to a wife, but: He shall cleave to his wife. Nor was Holy Writ content with that, but added: And they shall be two in one flesh. For this reason Christ too brought

forward this testimony and said: Therefore, now they are no longer two, but one flesh. So intimate is this union and adherence that the two of them are one flesh. Tell me, what reckoning will be able to discover this, what power of reason will be able to understand what takes place? Was not that blessed teacher of the whole world correct in saying that it is a mystery? And he did not simply say a mystery, but: This is a great mystery.

14. If, then, in the world of sensible realities it is a mystery, and a great mystery, what could one properly say of this spiritual marriage? Since everything here belongs to the spiritual order, note carefully now that things are here done in a way quite contrary to the order of sense. In the marriage seen by bodily eyes, no man would allow himself to take any woman as his wife without first taking pains to learn not only of her beauty and her bodily charm, but also, and of greater importance than these, her wealth.

15. In the spiritual marriage there is nothing like this. Why? Because this ritual belongs to the spiritual order. Moved by His kindness, our Bridegroom hurries to save our souls. Even if some one is ugly, or ill-favored to the eye, or poor as poor can be, or lowborn, or a slave, or an outcast, or maimed, or burdened with the weight of his sins, the Bridegroom does not split hairs, nor is He inquisitive, nor does He demand an accounting. The gifts He gives are a master's munificence and grace. He asks one thing only from us: to forget the past and to show good will for the future.

THE CONTRACT AND GIFTS OF THE SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

16. Did you see how bountiful is His grace? Did you see the kind of bridegroom to whom those who heed His call are espoused? But let us also see, if you wish, the consequences of this spiritual marriage. Just as for a marriage in the sensible order a document covering the dowry is executed and gifts are given, the man bringing the gifts and the prospective bride the dowry contract, so in the spiritual marriage it is natural that something of that sort must take place. For the understanding must be led from things of the body to those which belong to the spirit, to things which come closer to God. What, then, is the dowry contract in this marriage? Nothing but the obedience and the agreement which will be made with the Bridegroom. And what are the gifts which the Bridegroom brings before the marriage? Hear the blessed Paul. He shows us when he says: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water by means of the word, in order that He might present to Himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

17. Did you see the magnitude of His gifts? Did you see the ineffable bounty of His love? Just as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for her. No man would ever have allowed himself to do this, namely, to pour out his blood for the woman who was

going to be his bride. But the kindly Master, imitating His own goodness,25 has accepted this great and marvelous sacrifice because of His solicitude for her, that by His own blood He might sanctify her; that, having cleansed her by the bath of baptism, He might present her to Himself a Church in all her glory. To this end He poured forth His blood and endured the cross, that through this He might freely give sanctification to us too, and might cleanse us through the bath of regeneration, and might present to Himself those who before were in dishonor and unable to speak with confidence, but now are glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

18. You see how in saying: That He might cleanse and present to Himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, He teaches us that, before this, the Church was in an unclean condition. Consider all these things, then, you new soldiers of Christ, and look not upon the enormity of your own evils, nor take account of the excessiveness of your sins; rather should you ponder these words carefully and waver not the way you do. You know well the Master's munificence, the bounty of His grace, the grandeur of His gift. Let all of you who have here been esteemed worthy of being admitted to citizenship show an abundance of good will and come forward! Put away from you all you have done up to now, and prove with your whole heart that you are through with the past.

BELIEVE IN THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

19. Then you know well the kind of persons you are and in what plight the Master finds you when He allows you to approach Him; neither does He search out your sins nor does He exact justice for your blunders. Therefore, do you contribute your fair share, and make a strong confession of faith in Him, not only with your lips but also with your understanding. For with the heart, He says, a man believes unto justice; and with the mouth, profession of faith is made unto salvation. For the understanding must be strongly fixed in pious faith, and the tongue must herald forth by its confession the solid resolution of the mind.

20. Faith, then, is the foundation of piety. Let me speak to you briefly of this faith, so that we may lay an indestructible foundation. Then we may build the whole building with safety. It is fitting, therefore, that those who have enlisted in this special army of the spirit believe in the God of the universe, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the cause of all things, the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, who can be explained neither by word nor understanding, who has by His kindness and goodness created all things.

21. And in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord, who is in all ways like and equal to the Father with a likeness to Him which is unchangeable; consubstantial with the Father but known in His own Person; proceeding from the Father in a manner that cannot be

expressed; who was before time began and is Creator of all ages; who in later times, for our salvation, took the form of a slave and became man, dwelt with human nature, was crucified, and rose again on the third day.

22. You must have these articles of faith accurately fixed in your minds, that you may not be easily overwhelmed by the deceits of the devil. But if the Arians wish to trip you up, you should know for sure that you must block up your ears to what they say. Answer them with confidence, and show them that the Son is like in substance to the Father. For it is the Son Himself who said: As the Father raises up the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He will, and in all things He shows that He has equal power with the Father. And if, from the other side, Sabellius desires to destroy sound doctrines by glossing over the distinction of Persons, my beloved, wall up your ears against him too, and teach him that the substance of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one, but that there are three Persons. For neither could the Father be called Son, nor the Son Father, nor could the Holy Spirit be called anything other than that. Each remains in His own Person, but each possesses equal power.

23. You must also keep this truth firmly fixed in your minds, that the Holy Spirit is of the same dignity as the Father and the Son. Christ said to His disciples: Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

24. Did you see the exactness with which Christ makes profession of this truth? Did you see how unambiguous His instruction is? Let no one hereafter disturb your mind by bringing the searchings of his own reason into the Church's dogmas as he tries to confuse beliefs that are correct and sound. Avoid the companionship of such people as you would avoid drugs which could destroy you. For these people are more dangerous than poisonous drugs. The drugs do harm only to the body; these people destroy the very salvation of the soul. That is why it is fitting from the very beginning to avoid such discussions with these people, especially until you will be able, with the passage of time, to curb their impudent tongues, after you have fortified yourself well with the weapons of the spirit, the testimony of Holy Writ.

EMBRACE THE YOKE OF CHRIST

25. Such is the strictness we wish you to show in regard to the dogmas of the Church, and we desire you to keep them fast fixed in your minds. It is also fitting that those who manifest such faith shine forth by their good conduct. Hence, I must also instruct in this matter those who are about to deserve the royal gift, so that you may be able to know that there is no sin so great that it can conquer the munificence of the Master. Even if one is a fornicator, or an adulterer, or effeminate, or unnatural in his lust, or has consorted with

prostitutes, or is a thief, or has defrauded others, or is a drunkard, or an idolater, the power of the gift and the love of the Master are great enough to make all these sins disappear and to make the sinner shine more brightly than the rays of the sun, if he will only give evidence of good resolution.

26. Consider, then, the exceeding greatness of this gift of a kindly God, and make yourselves ready beforehand to abstain from evil deeds and to do good. The prophet urges us to do this when he says: Decline from evil and do good. And Christ Himself, addressing the whole human race, said: Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

27. Did you see the abundance of His goodness? Did you see the munificence of His invitation? Come to me, He says, all you who labor and are burdened. His invitation is one of kindness, His goodness is beyond description. Come to me all, not only rulers but also their subjects, not only the rich but also the poor, not only the free but also slaves, not only men but women, not only the young but also the old, not only those of sound body but also the maimed and those with mutilated limbs, all of you, He says, come! For such are the Master's gifts; He knows no distinction of slave and free, nor of rich and poor, but all such inequality is cast aside. Come, He says, all you who labor and are burdened.

28. And see whom He calls! Those who have spent their strength in breaking the law, those who are burdened with their sins, those who can no longer lift up their heads, those who are filled with shame, those who can no longer speak out. And why does He call them? Not to demand an accounting, nor to hold court. But why? To relieve them of their pain, to take away their heavy burden. For what could ever be a heavier burden than sin? Even if we blind our eyes a thousand times to it, if we try to hide it from the eyes of the world, this weight of sin rouses against us our conscience, that judge which cannot be bribed. In its role of judge, conscience rises up against us and never ceases to inflict on us unceasing pain, like a public executioner who mangles and strangles us in our minds, and thus shows us the enormity of sin. I shall refresh you who are weighted down by sin, He says, and you who are bent down as if under a burden; I shall grant you remission of your sins. Only come to me! Who is so hard of heart and unyielding that he will turn a deaf ear to so kindly a call?

29. Then, to teach us how He will give us rest, He added: Take my yoke upon you. Come under my yoke, He says. But do not be afraid when you hear the word "yoke"; for neither does it rub the neck nor make you bend your head, but this yoke teaches you to think lofty thoughts and instructs you in the true pursuit of wisdom. Take my yoke upon you and learn. Only come under my yoke and you will learn. Learn, that is, lend an ear that you may be able to learn from me. I seek nothing very burdensome from you. You, the slaves,

imitate me, the Master; do you, who are earth and ashes, emulate me who created heaven and earth and made you. Learn from me, He says, for I am meek and humble of heart.

PORTRAIT OF THE MAN MEEK AND HUMBLE OF HEART

30. Did you see how the Master comes down to us? Did you see His infinite kindness? He made no burdensome or oppressive demands on us. Nor did he say: Learn from me, because I have worked miracles, because I have raised the dead, because I have shown forth wondrous deeds, things which belong to His power alone. But what did He say? Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Do you see what a boon and advantage this yoke is? Therefore, he who has deserved to come under this yoke, he who has been able to learn from the Master to be meek and humble of heart, shall obtain complete rest for his soul. For this is the summary of our salvation. He who has acquired this virtue, although still entangled in the flesh, will be able to vie with immaterial powers and to be free from any connection with his present life.

31. For he who imitates the Master's meekness will not lose his temper nor be roused against his neighbor. Even if someone shall strike him, he will say: If I have spoken ill, bear witness to the evil; but if well, why dost thou strike me? If anyone call out and say that he is possessed by an evil spirit, he answers: I have not a devil, and none of the charges brought forward against him will be able to hurt him. Such a man will scorn all the glory of the present life; nothing of the visible world will win him over to itself, for from now on he will see things through different eyes. The man who is humble of heart will never be able to envy his neighbor's possessions. He will not steal, nor will he commit fraud; he will not yearn for wealth, but, while showing great compassion for his kindred, he will even forsake the wealth which he does have. Such a man will not undermine another's marriage. Since he has come under the yoke of Christ and has learned to be meek and humble of heart, he will follow in the steps of the Master and manifest every virtue in every way.

32. Let us, therefore, come under the yoke which is good and lift up the burden which is light, that we too may be able to find rest. He who has come under this yoke ought to forget his old way of life and keep a close watch over his eyes. For the Master says: Anyone who even looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So we must put a guard on our eyes, that death may not enter through them. We must keep a sharp watch not only over our eyes, but on our tongue as well. For it is written: Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have fallen by the tongue. As the other passions come to birth, we must curb them and make our minds tranquil; we must banish anger, passion, grudges, enmity, malice, evil desires, all licentiousness, all the works of the flesh, which, according to St. Paul, are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, jealousies, drunkenness, and carousings.

33. It is fitting, therefore, to force out of our souls all these vices and to be eager to acquire the fruit of the Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, modesty, and continence. If we shall thus purify our minds by constantly chanting the lessons of piety,49 we shall henceforth be able, by preparing ourselves beforehand, to make ourselves worthy to receive His gift, great as it is, and to guard the good things which are given.

THE TRUE ADORNMENT OF WOMAN

34. Hereafter let there be no concern for external embellishments and expensive clothes, but let all your zeal be directed to making your souls comely, that they may shine forth with a brighter beauty. Pay no attention to garments made from the silkworm's threads, nor to necklaces of gold. For the teacher of the whole world, who knew full well the weakness of women's nature and the unsteadiness of their wills, did not hesitate to issue orders on these matters. Why do I say that he did not refuse to instruct you about these matters? While giving counsel to you women on your adornment, did he not cry out: Not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothing? Is not this all but an instruction concerning your desire to adorn yourselves and to win praise from those who behold you? I shall call not only on your fellow human beings but on the Master of all things to praise and honor you.

35. Since Paul has spurned the adornment for women which depends on braided hair and gold ornaments and pearls and expensive clothing, let us see now with what raiment he does adorn them. For even if the golden ornaments and clothes with which a woman adorns herself bring a brief delight to her who wears them, are they not worn out after a while? Why do I say they are worn out? Even before time wears them out they excite the eyes of the envious and turn the hands of villains to theft. But the raiment with which Paul adorns women can neither be stolen nor does it wear out; it lasts forever, abiding with us here, going along with us hereafter; it provides us with confidence in abundance.

36. We must, however, hear the exact words of the Apostle. What, then, does he say? But with good works such as become women professing godliness. Do deeds worthy of your profession, he says, and adorn yourself with good deeds. Let the good deeds you do imitate your profession; you profess godliness, so do what is pleasing to Him, that is, good deeds. What is this phrase "with good deeds"? He means the whole collection of virtues: scorn of this world, yearning for the world to come, disdain for riches, generosity to the poor, modesty, meekness, pursuit of wisdom, disposing our souls in peace and serenity, not cringing before the glory of the present life, but keeping our gaze ever straining upward, so that we are ever anxious for the things of heaven and desire the glory hereafter.

37. Since I am now speaking especially to the women, I wish to make certain other recommendations to them. I wish you women to abstain not only from other hurtful practices, but also from the habit of painting your faces and adding to them, as if the workmanship were defective. By doing so you insult the Workman. For what are you trying to do, woman? By using rouge and eye shadow you cannot add to your natural beauty nor change your natural ugliness, can you? These add nothing to your beauty of face, but they will destroy the beauty of your soul. For this meddling with nature testifies to your interior weakness. Especially are you heaping up abundant fire for yourself by exciting the looks of young men, and attracting to yourself the eyes of the undisciplined; by making complete adulterers of them, you are bringing their downfall onto your own head.

38. It is fitting and helpful to abstain from this practice entirely. But if those women who are caught in the grip of this evil habit should be unwilling to give up the use of cosmetics, at least let them not use them when they are coming to the house of prayer. Why, tell me, when you come to church, do you adorn yourself in this way? You have come to worship God and to make confession to Him in atonement for your sins. Does He look for this beauty? No. He seeks the beauty from within, He looks for the activity which expresses itself in good deeds, He desires almsgiving, temperance, compunction, and strict faith. But you have forsaken these virtues; you are trying to trip up many of the careless ones, even in church. By what thunderbolts do such actions deserve to be punished? You arrive in port and you cause your own shipwreck. You come to the physician to have your wounds cured, and you go away after making them worse. What pardon will there be for you hereafter? If some women were in the past so careless of their own salvation, now at least let them be persuaded to rid themselves of this outrageous practice. If the Apostle forbade the use of expensive clothing, much more would he forbid the use of cosmetics and eye shadow.

AGAINST OMENS, OATHS, SPECTACLES

39. Next, I exhort both men and women to shun altogether omens and superstitions. These are foolish practices of the Greeks and of those who are still in the grip of error, this meddling of yours with the cawing of crows, the squeaking of mice, the creaking of beams; your joy on encountering those who are living disgraceful lives, while you avoid meeting with pious and devout persons, as if they were the cause of countless evils. See how many are the devices of the devil! He not only wishes us to be destitute of virtue and inclined to vice, but he also tries to instill in us such a hatred for virtue that we turn away from those who are seeking it. And again, he not only desires us to pursue wickedness but he is eager and anxious to adapt us to it by making us take pleasure in encountering it.

40. Do not think that these matters are insignificant and trifling. They can make your soul founder and go down to the very abyss of evil. This is the wicked demon's plan, to trip you up by little things. But henceforth do you, the new soldiers of Christ, both men and women —for the army of Christ knows no distinction of sex—cut off every habit of this sort, because you are going to receive the King of the universe. Cleanse your minds so thoroughly that no uncleanness darkens your thoughts.

41. If someone has an enemy, let him be reconciled; let him consider the great good he is going to receive from the Master, even though he is overwhelmed in the sea of so many sins; let him forgive his neighbor's offenses against him. Holy Writ says: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor. If, therefore, someone is holding bonds with accumulated interest, let him tear them up; for it is written: Tear up every unjust contract. To put it simply, let him take the lead in showing his own generosity, that he may receive generosity from the Master in great abundance.

42. Above all, teach your tongues to keep clean in the matter of oaths. I do not mean only such oaths as are falsely sworn, but also those taken rashly and in vain, which also hurt those who swear them. It was said, the Master tells us, Thou shalt not swear falsely.... But I say to you not to swear at all. You heard the Master say not to swear at all; henceforth refrain from meddling with things which the Master has ordained, but heed Him who has enjoined it and cleanse your minds completely.

43. Let there be no more talk about the hippodrome and the lawless spectacles of the theatre, for they provide the fuel for licentiousness; let there be no talk of the cruel pleasure derived from the combats between wild beasts and men. For what pleasure is there in watching a fellow human, who shares in the same nature as yourself, being mangled by savage beasts? Are you not afraid, do you not shudder, for fear that a thunderbolt might fall from on high and set your head ablaze? For it is you, one might say, who sharpen the teeth of the beast. You, by your shouts, have a personal part in the murder, if not by your hand, at least by your tongue.

DO HONOR TO THE NAME OF CHRISTIAN

44. I beg you, do not be careless in pondering on your own salvation. Consider your deserts and blush. When a man reverences human dignity, he repeatedly refuses to do anything which would inflict outrage on this dignity. Should you not see to it that you deserve such reverence, inasmuch as you are about to acquire so great a dignity? And this is a great dignity. It coextends with the present life and the life you will live together hereafter. What is this dignity? Henceforth, through the kindness of God, you will be called a Christian and one of the faithful. There is not one dignity here, but two. Soon you will put on Christ. You must act and deliberate in all things with the knowledge that He is

everywhere with you.

45. Those who administer the affairs of state are clad in robes bearing the imperial images. They are proud of the garb they wear and, because of it, they wish to be deemed all the more deserving of honor. Because of it, they enjoy the benefit of an armed guard. If those men, then, wish to be held in reverence because they have the imperial image on their robes, how much more should this be the case with you, who are about to put on Christ Himself! I shall dwell among you, says Holy Writ. And I will walk among you and will be your God.

46. Avoid, then, all these wicked snares of the devil and hold nothing in greater honor than your entrance into the Church. Let us have great zeal for virtue along with our abstinence from food and our abstinence from evil. Let us spend the whole day long in prayers and confessions, in reading and compunction; let all our zeal be so directed that our discourse be of spiritual things. We must be very careful not to be caught in the traps of the wicked one. For if justice is demanded of us for an idle word, how much more will this be so for ill-timed nonsense and worldly conversation?

47. If, therefore, you show this concern and care for the health of your souls, you will win God to a greater kindness, and you will enjoy greater confidence. We shall be very eager to give you your next instructions, knowing that the words we speak are falling onto well-disposed ears, and that we are sowing these seeds on rich and fertile soil. May it come to pass that you merit in abundance the gift of God, and that we obtain from Him His love, by the grace and mercy of His only-begotten Son, with whom be to the Father and Holy Spirit glory, power, and honor, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

St. John Chrysostom, St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions, ed. Johannes Quasten and Walter J. Burghardt, trans. Paul W. Harkins, vol. 31, Ancient Christian Writers (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1963), 23–43.