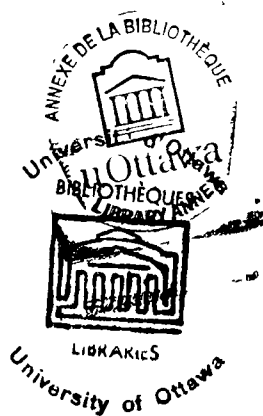


THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIVINE ADOPTION
ACCORDING TO
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

by Sister Louis Marie Downey, S.C.H.

Thesis presented to the Faculty of
Arts of the University of Ottawa as
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Sacred Sciences



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Sister Louis Marie (Mary Elizabeth Downey) S.C.H., was born March 5, 1908, in Boston, Massachusetts. She became a member of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax, in 1925, and was professed in that community in 1928. The Bachelor of Arts degree was conferred upon her by Fordham University, New York, in 1932, and the Bachelor of Library Science degree by Mt. St. Vincent College, Halifax, in 1947. Sister Louis Marie has been a teacher in both the United States and Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was prepared under the supervision of Reverend Walter Bedard, O.F.M., who by his patient and constructive criticism has helped to make the project a reality. For his encouragement and valuable assistance, I am deeply grateful. I also wish to express appreciation to the Administration and Faculty of the University of Ottawa, particularly Reverend Maurice Giroux, O.M.I., and Reverend Joseph Dooley. I wish to add a vote of special thanks to the Librarian and Staff of Sedes Sapientiae Institute, Ottawa. I am also indebted to my religious superiors who provided the time and the opportunity for the accomplishment of this work, to Reverend Emile Des Rosiers and to Reverend John Wheaton, priests of the Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax, for their gracious loan of books, and to Sister Francis Dolores, for the use of the library facilities of Mt. St. Vincent University, Halifax. To these and to all who have helped me, I extend a prayerful "thank you."

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	<u>Ancient Christian Writers</u>
ANF	<u>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</u>
BAR	<u>Bareille, Oeuvres complètes de Saint Jean Chrysostome</u>
FC	<u>The Fathers of the Church</u>
LFC	<u>The Library of the Fathers of the Church</u>
MG	<u>Migne: Patrologia graeca</u>
NPNF	<u>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</u>
SCH	<u>Sources chrétiennes</u>

INTRODUCTION

Pierre Rousselot says that "the Johannine doctrine of divine adoption or generation has been a favourite and enthusiastic topic of the Greek Fathers. It is the heart of their theology. And while it has never been the object of an explicit conciliar decision, the reason may well be that it was the common foundation of the religious thought of the fourth century."¹

However, this doctrine which the Greek Fathers stressed with such "loving insistence"² was gradually relegated to the background in Catholic thought. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as scholastic theology developed, recourse to patristic sources diminished. By the nineteenth century, rationalism had so penetrated Catholic thought that it sapped theology of much of its vigor. There were, however, theologians who endeavored to restore to man's consciousness the idea and value of the supernatural. Foremost among them was Matthias Joseph Scheeben, whom Cyril Vollert calls "the chief theologian of the supernatural order."³

¹ Pierre Rousselot, "La grâce d'après saint Jean et saint Paul," Recherches de science religieuse, XVIII, No. 1 (1928), 90.

² F. Cuttaz, Our Life of Grace, trans. Angeline Bouchard (Chicago: Fides Publishing Co., 1958), p. 70.

³ Matthias J. Scheeben, Nature and Grace, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), Foreword, p. xv.

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Vollert describes Scheeben as making "the drab naturalistic world of the nineteenth century glow again in the light and beauty of grace; he brought back to the consciousness of men the glorious destiny of their conformation to God."¹

Scheeben unveiled again "the image of the true man, who is the deified man, a child of the heavenly Father, and a member of the Incarnate Son."² In doing this, Scheeben had recourse to the great Fathers of the East, one of whom is St. John Chrysostom. Stimulated by Scheeben's thoughts on divine adoption as presented in his Glories of Divine Grace³ and desiring to acquire a clearer understanding of this truth,⁴ I had recourse to writings by other theologians. In one of these, Our Life of Grace, by Canon Cuttaz, I discovered that the author limited his Greek patristic source material on divine adoption to St. Athanasius and to St. John Chrysostom.⁵ I concluded that the latter saint had something substantial to offer on divine adoption. I resolved to discover what it was. Hence, the present dissertation.

¹Matthias J. Scheeben, Nature and Grace, Foreword, p. x.

²Ibid., p. xiv.

³Matthias J. Scheeben, The Glories of Divine Grace, trans. Patrick Shaughnessy (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publication, 1947), Part II, pp. 34-60.

⁴Council of Trent, 6th session, "Decree on Justification," The Church Teaches, n. 560, p. 232.

⁵Canon Cuttaz, Our Life of Grace, p. 70.

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Before presenting Chrysostom's teachings, let us consider briefly the man, his background, and his doctrinal writings. St. John Chrysostom has been described as "the most charming of the Greek Fathers and one of the most congenial personalities of Christian antiquity."¹ His rare gift of eloquence gained him the title of "Chrysostom" or "Golden-mouthed"² which has almost taken the place of his real name ever since it was bestowed on him in the sixth century. Chrysostom lived in a period of comparative dogmatic quiet and calm. The people were weary of sermons on the nature and person of the Logos which Arianism had made necessary. They were hungry for practical advice. Chrysostom considered it his sacred duty to improve and elevate the morals of his people, so that they would not merely be called Christians, but be Christians and live as Christians.³ This, however, does not imply that he lacked a deep understanding of difficult theological questions. It has been pointed out that he based his entire preaching on Scripture; hence the study of his writings is considered particularly important for

¹ Johannes Quasten, Patrology (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1960), III, 429.

² Ibid., p. 430.

³ Chrysostomus Baur, John Chrysostom and His Times, trans. Sister M. Gonzaga (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1960), I, 355.

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positive theology.¹ Since, properly speaking, none of his writings is an investigation of a theological problem, Chrysostom's doctrinal teaching is scattered throughout his works. Many of his ideas relating to the doctrine of divine adoption are contained in his Homilies on the Epistles of St. Paul, those on the Gospels of St. Matthew and of St. John, and in his Baptismal Instructions. These are the works that have been used most frequently in the present thesis. The pages that follow will endeavour to present an accurate though not exhaustive study of Chrysostom's teaching on divine adoption and its significance. By referring to documents of Vatican Council II, they will attempt to show that what the saint said to the Christians of his day is both in keeping with the Church's magisterium and timely for Christians of our day.

The authenticity of the works used has been checked with Quasten's Patrology. The prestige of Chrysostom's name has occasioned the false attribution to him of far more writings than to any other Greek Father. Three hundred spurious works have been printed and six hundred exist in manuscript form. Some spuria belong materially but not formally to Chrysostom. Others are downright forgeries.²

¹ Johannes Quasten, Patrology, III, 474.

² Ibid., III, 470.

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Hence, it is necessary to be cautious in using works attributed to Chrysostom.

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF ADOPTION

To have a reference for St. John Chrysostom's doctrine on adoption, we will start with a definition of adoption as understood in everyday life. Such a definition is provided by St. Thomas Aquinas. He teaches that adoption is the gratuitous acceptance of a person outside one's offspring to be a son and heir.¹ Although the term "adoption" is applicable to both God and man,² St. Thomas makes a distinction in its use. In human adoption a stranger is accepted into the family. He is given parental love and affection; he has a right to share in the paternal inheritance. However, he is not a real son. He is only recognized as such by the law.³ In divine adoption, the justified sinner is admitted

¹Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Index primus, V, 7. III^a, q. 23, a. 1.

²Ibid., III^a, q. 23, a. 1, note 1.

³Ibid., III^a, q. 23, a. 1. Cf. Cardinal Mercier explains the status of a child adopted by man as follows: "Legal adoption is a fiction. The adopted child is considered by his adopted parents as if he were their child and receives from them the heritage to which their natural child would have had a right. Society recognizes this fiction and sanctions its effect. Nevertheless, the object of this fiction is not transformed into a reality. The fact remains that the adopted child does not possess the blood of those who declare he is theirs by adoption." D. J. Cardinal Mercier, La vie intérieure: Retraite prêchée à ses prêtres, 6^e entretien (Paris: Beauchesne, 1923), p. 406.

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into the family of God. He receives a share in the divine nature. He is really a son, regenerated in God. As such, he acquires a right to an inheritance.¹ With this latter explanation in mind, let us proceed to the meaning of adoption in the writings of St. John Chrysostom.

Sons in Reality

With the words of Christ as an authority, St. John Chrysostom says that Christians can know that they are children of God. During the saint's time, many Christians at Antioch had acquired the habit of taking part in Jewish feasts. Wishing to check the growth of this evil practice, the saint explains why it should not exist. The Jews, called to be children of adoption, rejected the teachings of Christ and reduced themselves to the condition of senseless beasts. The Gentiles, on the contrary, although formerly in this latter condition, were able, by the help of divine grace, to raise themselves to the dignity of children. Chrysostom supports his teaching by quoting the words of Christ to the Chanaanite: "It is not good to take the bread of the children and to throw it to the dogs" (Matthew 15:26). Chrysostom continues to explain that Christ Himself called

¹ Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 23, a. 1. Cf. "The grace of divine adoption is not a fiction, it is not a convention, it is a reality." D. J. Cardinal Mercier, La vie intérieure, p. 406.

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the Jews children and the Gentiles dogs, but now the order is changed. Christians are the children. They have passed from a condition of wretchedness to that of children.¹

Not only do we know that we are children from the words of Christ but also from the words of St. Paul. In his commentary on Galatians St. Chrysostom, after saying that the Word Incarnate has given us the adoption of children, continues to show how we know this. First, he remarks that one who puts on Christ, the Son by nature, is a son.² He shares in Christ's nature and displays Christ in his person.³ To clarify this statement, let us consider the saint's commentary on Galatians (3:27).

Referring to St. Paul's words, "Baptized into Christ" and having "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27), St. Chrysostom asks: "Why does he not say: 'For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have been born of God?' for this was what directly went to prove that they were sons."⁴ Immediately, he gives the reason:

He states it in a much more awful point of view: if Christ be the Son of God, and thou hast put on Him, thou who hast the Son within thee, and art fashioned

¹ Chrysostome, Contre les Juifs 1:2 (BAR 2:354-355).

² Chrysostome, Aux Galates 4:1 (BAR 18:129).

³ Chrysostom, On Galatians 3:27 (NPNF 13:30).

⁴ Ibid.

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after His pattern, hast been brought into one kindred and nature with Him. . . . See what an insatiable soul! . . . Having said, "You have put on Christ," even this does not suffice him, but by way of penetrating more deeply into this union, he comments on it thus: "You are all one in Christ Jesus," that is, you have all one form and one mould, even Christ's. What can be more awful than these words! He that was a Greek, or Jew, or bond-woman yesterday, carries about with him the form, not of an angel, or archangel, but of the Lord of all, yea displays in his own person the Christ.¹

Elsewhere, Chrysostom explains that Jew and Gentile are both made one not by knitting Gentile to Israelite but by knitting both of them together into one (Christ).²

Let the two be, one a slave, the other an adopted son: and let both offend Him, the one as a disinherited child, the other as a fugitive, and one who never knew a father. Then let both be heirs, both true-born sons. Behold! they are both exalted to one and the same dignity; the two are become one, the one coming from a longer, the other from a nearer distance, and the slave becoming more noble than he was before he offended.³

Thus, this close union with Christ comes from our sharing His sonship.

St. Chrysostom recalls that the Apostle points out another way by which we know that we are sons. He who has

¹ Chrysostom, On Galatians 3:27 (NPNF 13:30).

² Chrysostom, On Ephesians 5:13-15 (NPNF 13:71).

³ Ibid.

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received the Spirit of adoption is a son.¹

Because you are His children, God has sent into your hearts the Spirit of His Son, who cries: "Abba, Father." You are no longer a servant, you are sons, and as such, also heirs of God, thanks to Christ.²

In Chrysostom's commentary on Romans we can see more clearly what having the Spirit of adoption means. Here, the saint makes a distinction between the term "adoption of sons" as used in the Old Testament and as used in the New.³

Under the Old Dispensation God protected and cared for the Israelites in a special way. He gave them the Law through Moses, fed them with the miraculous manna, spoke to them through the prophets, and promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. He honored them with the title "sons," for they were called "gods and sons of the Most High" (Psalm 81:6). Despite this grace, they remained slaves, serving Him through fear. They never addressed Him as "Father" in prayer. In the words of St. Paul, Chrysostom says they retained a "spirit of bondage" (Romans 8:15).⁴

It is otherwise under the New Dispensation. Through Christ, God has given us the Law of Love. Christians are fed

¹Chrysostome, Aux Galates 4:1 (BAR 18:129).

²Ibid.

³Chrysostom, On Romans 14:15 (LFC 7:238).

⁴Ibid.

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at their Father's table with the Eucharist; they are promised heaven as joint heirs with Christ. "Born of God" (John 1:13) in baptism, they are sons not only in name but in fact. They endeavor to serve God in love and desire to please the Father. They receive the Spirit of adoption and can call God "Abba, Father!" which name is a sign of "true-born children."¹

Elsewhere, St. Chrysostom points out all that is included in calling God "Father."

He who calls God "Father," by Him both remission of sins, and taking away of punishment, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and adoption, and inheritance, and brotherhood with the only-begotten, and the supply of the Spirit are acknowledged in this single title. For one cannot call God "Father,"² without having attained to all those blessings.

Sharing in Christ's nature, displaying Christ in our person, receiving the Spirit of adoption, and calling God "Father" in prayer are signs that our adoption is a reality, that we share in the sonship of Christ.

In the thought of Chrysostom, we have no right to adoption. He says that it is "from pure loving-kindness, from tenderness, and from God's great mercy" that the baptized can call God "Father."³ Hence, in the following

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 14:15 (LFC 7:239-240). Cf. infra, p. 34, note 1.

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:6 (NPNF 10:134).

³Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:4 (LFC 6:105).

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paragraphs, we shall consider adoption as a work of divine love.

Adoption Is a Work of Divine Love

St. John Chrysostom, considering the Epistle to the Ephesians (1:4-6), sees our adoption as a work of "transcendent love."¹ It was no after-thought on the part of God. The saint says that God the Father "happily ordered it for us before we were born; nay more, before the foundation of the world, so that we would be 'holy and without blemish in His sight' (Ephesians 1:4)."² He continues to say that the Father wanted the glory of His grace displayed in us, so He predestinated us to the adoption of children.³ For Chrysostom, this gift has been preordained for those who manifest faith in Christ and who live morally good lives.⁴ Yet, he insists that our adoption is entirely a work of love. It does not come from "any pains, nor of any good works of ours, but of love."⁵ When we practise virtue, manifest faith, and answer the call of God, we are using blessings which themselves are effects of love. St. Chrysostom argues thus:

¹Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:4 (LFC 6:105).

²Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:4 (NPNF 13:51).

³Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:5 (LFC 6:106).

⁴Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:4 (LFC 6:104).

⁵Ibid.

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Our being rendered virtuous, and believing, and coming nigh unto Him, even this again was the work of Him that called us Himself, and yet, notwithstanding, it is ours also. But that on our coming nigh unto Him, He should vouchsafe us so high privileges, as to bring us at once from a state of enmity, to the adoption of children, this is indeed the work of a really transcendent love.¹

The goodness of God, manifested in the gift of adoption, is likewise emphasized in a baptismal instruction. Chrysostom reminds the neophytes that God bestows the gift regardless of their contribution.

Even though you had never done anything good, even though you had the burden of your sins lying heavy upon you, He imitated His own goodness and judged you worthy of these great gifts. For He not only delivered you from your sins and gave you justification by His grace, but He also showed you forth as holy and made you His sons by adoption.²

To help his hearers better to understand the greatness of such solicitude on God's part, St. Chrysostom recalls the story of Adam's fall from grace and of God's loving-kindness in raising fallen man from a state of enmity to the adoption of children.

In the beginning of time, God made "His dispositions

¹ Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:4 (LFC 6:105).

² John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 4:11 (trans. P. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers, No. 31, p. 70). "In Chrysostom, the expression 'imitating His own goodness' refers most often to God Himself, and it is almost an epithet of His nature. In all the works of Providence . . . God does act in imitation of His essential goodness." John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions (ACW 31:208), note 25.

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as a father for sons."¹ He created Adam, the first man, to His image. In the Garden of Paradise, crowned with honor and glory, Adam enjoyed God's friendship. But not content with being like God, he wanted to be equal to Him. Disobeying the command which God had imposed upon him, Adam fell from his "state of blessedness" and was cast down from his "place of honour."² His disobedience severed mankind's relationship with the Father. We became unworthy of the inheritance: "The Father willed not to leave us the inheritance, but was wrath against us, and was displeased (with us) as being estranged (from Him)."³ So great was the height from which human nature fell, Chrysostom informs us, that only God's creative power could restore it: "For it was not possible to raise it up otherwise, unless He who fashioned it in the beginning stretched out a hand to it and formed it again by the regeneration of water and the Spirit."⁴ God does this. He makes us new men by His Spirit. Chrysostom explains:

When a house is in a ruinous state no one places props under it, nor makes any addition to the old building, but pulls it down to its foundations,

¹Chrysostom, On Hebrews 16:2 (NPNF 14:443).

²Chrysostom, On John 9 (FC 33:94).

³Chrysostom, On Hebrews 16:2 (NPNF 14:443).

⁴Chrysostom, On John 11 (FC 33:109).

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and rebuilds it anew; so in our case, God has not repaired us, but has made us anew. For this is "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." He has made us new men. How? "By His Spirit" and to show this further, he (Paul) adds, "whom He has shed on us abundantly through Jesus our Saviour, in order that being justified by His grace, we may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-6).¹

St. Chrysostom, however, explains that we could not receive the Spirit until a sacrifice was offered that would destroy our "unfavorable status" and restore us to God's friendship.

Since a gift is usually bestowed, not on those who inspire dislike, but on friends and those who meet with approval, it was necessary for a sacrifice to be offered first on our behalf, and for man's unfavorable status to be destroyed and for us to become friends of God, and then to receive the gift.²

It was only after Christ's crucifixion and exaltation that we could receive "a spirit of adoption as sons" (Romans 8:15).³

In the meantime, God did not abandon the human race. Chrysostom informs us that God provided wisely and lovingly for mankind.⁴ By means of angels, prophets, and the Law He

¹Chrysostom, On Titus 5:5-6 (NPNF 13:538).

²Chrysostom, On John 51 (FC 41:38).

³Chrysostom, On John 51 (FC 41:37).

⁴John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 2:7 (ACW 31:45).

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endeavored to draw mankind to Himself. Finally, after a long period of time had elapsed, He rescued us by grace.

It was well nigh come to this, that man had been made in vain, brought into the world in vain, nay rather, to his ruin; when all were absolutely perishing, more fearfully than in the deluge, He devised this dispensation, that is by grace; that it might not be in vain, might not be to no purpose that man was created.¹

Chrysostom says that God, in His goodness, went after human nature which was fleeing from Him and overtook it.² He sent His own Son, who became for us a "means of life, even of eternal life."³ Such love on the part of God Chrysostom describes in his commentary on the words of St. John: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John 3:16). He comments that God "who is immortal, infinite, immense, limitless, has loved those made of earth and ashes, weighted down with countless sins"⁴ to such an extent that He not only gave His Son, but He gave Him in such a way that the beloved Son Himself was crucified, so that "ungrateful slaves"⁵ might be saved. "And He does this

¹Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:10 (NPNF 13:54).

²Chrysostom, On Hebrews 5:1 (NPNF 14:388).

³Chrysostom, On John 27 (FC 33:264).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Chrysostom, On John 27 (FC 33:263).

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though a man would not do it for His friend, nor would one readily do it for the sake of a just man; as Paul made clear when he said: 'For scarcely in behalf of a just man does one die' (Romans 5:7)."¹ Furthermore, "it was not a slave, not a messenger, not an archangel"² that the Father gave, but His Son. St. Chrysostom asks: "Who would show such solicitude for his child as God showed for ungrateful slaves?"³

The grace, however, which God the Father freely bestows on us through Christ does more than save us. It makes us objects of His love. Commenting on St. Paul's words, "He hath graced us in His beloved Son" (Ephesians 1:6), Chrysostom explains how.

It is as though one were to take a leper, wasted by distemper, and disease, by age, and poverty, and famine, and were to turn him all at once into a graceful youth surpassing all mankind in beauty, shedding a bright lustre from his cheeks, and eclipsing the sunbeams with the glances of his eyes; and then were to set him in the very flower of his age, and after that array him in purple and a diadem and all the attire of royalty. It is thus that God hath arrayed and adorned this soul of ours, and clothed it with beauty, and rendered it an object of His delight and love. . . . Such grace hath He shed over us, so dear hath He rendered us to Himself.⁴

¹Chrysostom, On John 27 (FC 33:263-264). Cf. Chrysostom, On Romans 15:322 (NPNF 11:454).

²Chrysostom, On John 27 (FC 33:264).

³Ibid.

⁴Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:6 (LFC 6:106-107).

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Through the grace of Christ we become dear to God as sons.¹

"The faithful," says Chrysostom, "are His gracious children."²

Marvelling at the power of divine love which makes us saints and children of God, Chrysostom advises his people to practise virtues in keeping with the dignity they have received. He explains that temporal dignities, which have a monetary value, end with this present life. They cannot be considered real honours. The gifts of sanctification and of adoption come from God Himself and cannot be destroyed by death. They follow us into eternity. Furthermore, the saint says that anyone who carefully preserves the glory of sonship and of sanctification is a thousand times happier and greater than the person clad in royal robes. He experiences the peace which comes from a right and pure conscience.³

In various sermons, St. Chrysostom endeavored to impress upon his people the power and the magnanimity of God's love in adopting them. Pondering the Apostle's words to the Romans, "To all God's beloved who are in Rome, called to be saints: grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7), Chrysostom exclaims:

¹ Chrysostom, On John 14 (FC 33:135).

² Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:6 (LFC 6:107)

³ Chrysostome, Aux Romains 1:4 (BAR 15:452).

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Strange! How mighty is the love of God! We who were enemies and disgraced have all at once become saints and sons. For when Paul calls Him "Father," he shows them to be sons; and when he says "sons,"¹ he has unveiled the whole treasure of blessings.

Elsewhere, St. Chrysostom explains that when God showed mercy to St. Paul, much more was implied than taking away the punishment due to sin. Sonship and the other favours bestowed on him were the result of God's "affection and excessive love."²

On another occasion, the preacher of Antioch reminds the newly baptized that the gifts which they have received are not trifling. They surpass human comprehension. Their magnitude overwhelms reason. From rebels, captives, and slaves, through God's kindness, they have been sanctified, given the grace of the Spirit, and exalted to adoption as His sons.³

St. John Chrysostom sees adoption not only as a reality but also as a work of love effected by the Three Divine Persons. Hence, we go on to consider the activity of the Blessed Trinity in the gift of adoption.

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 1:7 (NPNF 11:342). Cf. supra, p. 11, note 2.

²Chrysostom, On 1 Timothy 3:14 (NPNF 13:418).

³John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 5:22 (ACW 31:89). Cf. Ibid., 4:11 (ACW 31:70); Chrysostom, On Matthew 61:2 (NPNF 10:376).

CHAPTER II

RECEIVING DIVINE ADOPTION

Adoption and the Blessed Trinity

St. John Chrysostom says that we become sons of God in the "bath of regeneration."¹ He recognizes that every benefit conferred in baptism, hence our adoption,² is brought to fulfillment by the power of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is noticeable in the writings where he emphasizes the ministerial function of the priest in baptism. Chrysostom addresses a group of catechumens:

When the priest says: "So-and-so is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," he puts your head down into the water three times, and three times he lifts it up again, preparing you by this mystic rite to receive the descent of the Holy Spirit. For it is not only the priest who touches the head, but also the right hand of Christ, and this is shown by the very words of the one baptizing. He does not say: "I baptize so-and-so," but: "So-and-so is baptized," showing that he is only the minister of grace and merely offers his hand because he has been ordained to this end by the Spirit. The one fulfilling all things is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the undivided Trinity. It is faith in this Trinity which gives the grace of remission from sin; it is this confession which gives to us the gift of filial adoption.³

¹Chrysostom, On Galations 1:3 (LFC 6:8).

²Cf. supra, p. 11, note 1.

³John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 2:26 (ACW 31: 52-53). Cf. infra, p. 37, note 2.

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The triple immersion used in baptism signifies both a remission of sin and a birth to new life effected by the Trinity. When the priest immerses the head, the old man of sin is buried; when emergence takes place the new man of grace rises. "Just as it is easy for us to be immersed and to emerge (from the water), so it is easy for God to bury the old man and raise up the new."¹ Immersion is performed three times to indicate that the power of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit performs all this--burial, death, resurrection, and life.²

The saint also justifies his teaching that the whole Trinity is active in adoption by comparing the spiritual birth of a Christian to the birth of Isaac. Although Sara was old and past the age of childbearing, because of the promise made to Abraham, God made her womb fruitful. Contrary to the laws of nature she begot Isaac, a true son of Abraham. Chrysostom says that Isaac "was fashioned by the word of God."³ In the womb of the waters of baptism Christians, too, are formed and regenerated by the words of God spoken by the priest.

¹ Chrysostom, On John 25 (FC 33:247).

² Ibid.

³ Chrysostom, On Galatians 4:23 (LFC 6:69).

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As it was not nature but the promise of God which rendered Sara a mother, (for the word of God which said, "At this time next year I will return to you, and Sara shall have a son" (Genesis 18:10), this entered into the womb and formed the babe), so also in our regeneration it is not nature, but the words of God spoken by the priest . . . which in the bath of water as in a sort of womb, form and regenerate him who is baptized.¹

Again, commenting on the same birth in Romans, Chrysostom says that just as the power of the promise and the word of God fashioned Isaac and begot him, so are we also gendered by the words of God.

In the pool of water it is the words of God which generate and fashion us. For it is by being baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost that we are gendered. And this² birth is not of nature but of the promise of God.

Hence, Chrysostom concludes that all those who are born after the fashion of Isaac are in the truest sense Abraham's children and sons of God.³

Although adoption is effected by the undivided Trinity,⁴ Chrysostom frequently speaks of it in relation to

¹Chrysostom, On Galations 4:28 (LFC 6:71). Cf. The idea of the baptismal water being a womb is found also in Chrysostom's commentary on St. John's Gospel: "As the womb is to the embryo, so the water is to the believer, since he is formed and shaped in the water." Chrysostom, On John 26 (FC 33:251).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 16:9 (LFC 7:287).

³Chrysostom, On Romans 16:8 (LFC 7:286).

⁴Chrysostom, On Romans 13:10 (NPNF 11:436).

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one or several of the divine Persons. First, however, he insists that adoption is something so divine that it can be performed only by God.

Adoption: Performed by God--Not by Men or Angels

In his commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, St. Chrysostom states that when "God begets us, the gift is His only."¹ He does not entrust it even to the angels. The saint makes the observation that just as in human adoption, the person adopting is personally present in the courtroom, so, too, God Himself is present at our spiritual birth to enlist us as His children.

Seest thou not those who adopt to themselves sons here, how they commit not the act to representatives, but are themselves present at the court? Even so, neither hath God committed His gift to angels, but Himself is present, commanding and saying, "Call no man father on earth," (Matthew 23:9) not that thou shouldest dishonour them who gave thee birth, but that thou shouldest prefer to all those, Him who made thee and enrolled thee amongst His own children.²

Likewise, enumerating the effects of baptism to the catechumens, Chrysostom quotes the Psalmist to show that God

¹ Chrysostom, On Matthew 50:3 (NPNF 10:312).

² Chrysostom, On Matthew 50:3 (NPNF 10:312). Referring to this passage Paul Harkins says: "It is God who begets us in this divine rebirth, and He wishes us to have none other as father." John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions (ACW 31:227), note 58.

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alone bestows sonship and inheritance:

"Blessed be God, who alone does wonderful things," (Ps. 71:18) who does all things and transforms them. Before yesterday you were captives, but now you are free and citizens of the Church; lately you lived in the shame of your sins, but now you live in freedom and justice. You are not only free, but also holy; not only holy, but also just; not only just, but also sons; not only sons, but also heirs; not only heirs, but also brothers of Christ; not only brothers of Christ, but also joint heirs.¹

Adoption: By the Father

God alone does the wondrous deeds that make us His children and brethren of Christ. More specifically, it is God the Father who bestows these blessings. Chrysostom says that we receive them from "the God of Him, who was Incarnate, the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Ephesians 1:3)."² He instructs the catechumens to believe in this Father who is "the cause of all things."³

More frequently Chrysostom speaks of our adoption as the work of the Father through the Son. This is evident in the commentaries where he moves from the Father to the Son: "Adoption is willed by the Father and wrought by the Son; the One (the Father) has predestinated us; the Other (the Son)

¹ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 3:5-6 (ACW 31: 57). Cf. Chrysostom, On Matthew 11:6 (NPNF 10:71).

² Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:3 (NPNF 13:50).

³ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 1:20 (ACW 31: 31).

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has brought us near."¹ Referring to the Father's eternal plan of salvation, of which adoption is a part, the saint says: "The origination, the purpose, the will, and the first intention are from the Father, and the fulfillment and execution are effected by the agency of the Son."² Pondering St. Paul's words to the Galatians: "I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you to the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6), Chrysostom remarks that "the calling is from the Father, but the cause of it is the Son."³ Commenting on the words: "To the brethren in Colossae, holy and faithful in Christ Jesus: grace be to you and peace from God our Father" (Colossians 1:2), he explains that the Father has made them saints and sons of God, but it is because of Christ that they have been sanctified and are brothers.⁴ St. Chrysostom comments that the Christians of Corinth possessed a nobility which non-Christians lacked, because they had God as their Father. He recalls that they attained this dignity through Christ. He is the Person who brought about the filial relationship.

¹Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:5 (NPNF 13:52).

²Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:10 (NPNF 13:54).

³Chrysostom, On Galatians 1:6 (NPNF 13:6).

⁴Chrysostom, On Colossians 1:2 (NPNF 13:258).

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Ye are the children of Him in whose presence it is meet to glory, having become so through Christ . . . And of this nobility of ours, not this person or that, but Christ is the cause, having made us wise, and righteous, and holy. For so mean the words, "He was made unto us wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:30).¹

Briefly, Chrysostom concludes that nothing is done is adoption without Christ, and nothing is accomplished without the Father. The blessings bestowed by the Father are great, but they are enhanced in being bestowed through Christ, the only-begotten Son.²

The following paragraphs will show in greater detail Chrysostom's teaching on the particular work attributed to the Son in our adoption.

Adoption: Through the Son

In order that men might become sons of God, the only-begotten Son "because flesh" (John 1:14). St. Chrysostom expressly teaches that this was one reason for the Incarnation: "But, when the fulness of time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).³ Elsewhere, St. Chrysostom says: "Christ became the Son of Man, though He

¹ Chrysostom, On 1 Corinthians 5:4 (NPNF 13:24).

² Chrysostom, On Ephesians 1:4-5 (NPNF 13:52).

³ Chrysostome, Aux Galates 4:1 (BAR 18:128).

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was the true Son of God, in order that He might make the sons of men children of God."¹ Likewise, in explaining the genealogy of our Lord according to St. Matthew, Chrysostom makes the same point. He endeavours to arouse in his audience a sense of wonder and awe, because the real and true Son of the eternal God deigned to be called Son of David in order to make them sons of God.

He suffered a slave to be father to Him, that He might make the Lord, Father to thee, a slave. . . . If thou doubt concerning the things that pertain to thee, from what belongs to Him believe these also. For it is far more difficult, judging by human reason, for God to become man, than for a man to be declared a son of God. When, therefore, thou art told that the Son of God is son of David and Abraham, doubt not any more, that thou, too, the son of Adam, shalt be son of God. For not at random, nor in vain did He abase Himself so greatly, only He was minded to exalt us. Thus, He was born after the flesh, that thou mightest be born after the Spirit; He was born of a woman, that thou mightest cease to be the son of a woman.²

Now, let us be more precise. St. Chrysostom says that the Incarnation effects sonship: "He (Christ) has given us the adoption of children."³ Moreover, we have received it

¹Chrysostom, On John 11 (FC 33:108).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 2:3 (NPNF 10:10). Terrien says: "This same thought is found among so many of the Fathers that it would be impossible to write all that they say about it." J. B. Terrien, La grâce et la gloire (Paris: Lethielleux, 1897), I, 9.

³Chrysostome, Aux Galates 4:1 (BAR 18:129).

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as something that was due to us because of the promise made to Abraham.¹

It was when the old age of sin had come over us, that Isaac (the true seed of promise) suddenly sprang up in youth (grace) and we all became the children of God.²

St. Chrysostom asks if anything could be comparable to the loving-kindness of Christ. He makes us members of His family.

What could be comparable to this loving-kindness? A king who has been made of the same clay as we does not deem it fitting to enroll in the royal army his fellow men who share the same human nature with him, if they are slaves, though often they are superior to him in character; but the only-begotten Son of God has not considered it unworthy to enroll in the number of His family tax-collectors, and charlatans, and slaves, and persons less honourable than all these, and even many unsound in body and with countless infirmities.³

Although Chrysostom explains that by wedding our human nature to His divine nature the incarnate Word elevated us to a state of glory,⁴ something else was done to bring about the effect. Christ also died for us. Chrysostom writes that Christ died for the ungodly whom He "reconciled,

¹Chrysostome, Aux Galates 4:1 (BAR 18:129).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 16:9 (LFC 7:287).

³Chrysostom, On John 10 (FC 33:100).

⁴Chrysostom, On John 11 (FC 33:108).

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justified, made immortal, sons, and heirs"¹; Christ paid the penalty for sin by the birthpangs of His death, and by this means caused the new man to be regenerated;² He "provided life for others by His death"³; Christ's death on the Cross "made men angels and sons of God."⁴

Inspired by St. Paul, Chrysostom sees in the symbolism of baptism a likeness to the death of Christ. Commenting on Romans (6:5), St. Chrysostom says that Christ's death and burial brought salvation to the world; our burial in baptism brings about adoption: "As His body, by being buried in the earth, brought forth as the fruit of it the salvation of the world; thus ours also, being buried in baptism, bore as fruit righteousness, sanctification, and adoption."⁵

From all this, it is clear that it is Christ, who by His Incarnation and Death, accomplishes the Father's will of making men children of God.

Adoption: In the Spirit

The grace of adoption executed by Christ is given in the Holy Spirit, the greatest possible gift that could be

¹ Chrysostom, On Romans 9:4-5 (NPNF 11:398).

² Chrysostom, On John 79 (FC 41:354).

³ Chrysostom, On John 26 (FC 33:25).

⁴ Chrysostom, On 2 Timothy 2:8-9 (NPNF 13:480).

⁵ Chrysostom, On Romans 11:5 (LFC 7:166).

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given us. The Spirit causes us to become sons of God and brethren of Christ.

That gift . . . which is the greatest possible, He hath given; not heaven and earth and sea, but what is more precious than any of these, and hath rendered us angels from being men; yea sons of God and brethren of Christ. But what is this gift? ¹The Holy Spirit.

St. Chrysostom exalts the greatness of this gift.

Indeed, if He had died only for such creatures as we be, a proof of the greatest love would what He had done be! But when He is seen at once dying, and yielding us a gift, and that such a gift and to such creatures, what was done casts into the shade our highest conceptions and leads the very dullest on to faith.²

Christ, through His death, makes us fit for the Father's love and for the Spirit. Chrysostom says: "By Himself and the Spirit He hath brought all men to the Father."³

The Holy Spirit whom Christ bequeathed to us, is given to us now in baptism by the Father. In his commentary on Philippians, St. Chrysostom remarks that the prodigal son received a portion of the inheritance from his father. Then he makes the observation that we, too, receive a portion of

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 9:4-5 (LFC 7:141).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 9:9-10 (LFC 7:142).

³Chrysostom, On Ephesians 6:17 (LFC 6:158).

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the inheritance from our Father: "Has He not given us the Holy Spirit in baptism?"¹

That we receive the Spirit in baptism is more fully explained in Chrysostom's commenting on the "heavens were opened" at the baptism of Jesus and "the Spirit of God descending as a dove" (Matthew 3:16). The dove appeared not only to point out to John and the spectators the Son of God, but also to inform us that at our baptism the Spirit does come.² The saint recalls what happened at the time of the Flood. Then, the dove appeared bearing an olive branch. It indicated deliverance from the tempest and published the good news of the calm of the whole earth. At the baptism of Christ a similar thing occurred. The dove appeared, not bearing an olive branch, but pointing to Christ the deliverer and bringing adoption to all men.

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 doth she lead one man only, but the whole world she leads up to heaven at her appearing, and instead of a branch of peace from an olive, she conveys adoption³ to all the world's off-spring in common.

¹ Chrysostom, On Philipians 11:4 (LFC 14:136).

² Chrysostom, On Matthew 12:3 (LFC 11:167).

³ Chrysostom, On Matthew 12:3 (LFC 11:167).

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Likewise, at our baptism the heavens are opened and Christ sends down His Spirit to "call us to our country there; and not merely to call us, but also with the greatest mark of dignity. For He hath not made us angels and arch-angels, but He hath caused us to become sons of God."¹

Elsewhere, St. Chrysostom describes the activity of the Holy Spirit at baptism:

Our eyes were opened, our ears were opened, our tongue spoke holy words, our soul received strength, our body received such beauty and bloom, as it is fitting that he who is born a son of God should have from the grace of the Spirit, such glory as it is fitting that the new-born² son of a king should have, nurtured in purple.

The same Spirit who forms Christians in the baptismal water also formed the incarnate Christ in the womb of Mary. Chrysostom explains: "Without conjugal union, He (Christ) was begotten of the Holy Ghost; so also are we begotten in the Laver."³ The saint adds that any child begotten naturally is one flesh with its parents, and so the spiritual offspring from the marriage of Christ and the Church is one flesh with Christ by participation, and much more than the child of natural parents. We are of His Spirit: "As then

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 12:4 (LFC 11:169).

²Chrysostom, On Philippians 11:4 (LFC 14:136).

³Chrysostom, On Ephesians 20:30 (LFC 6:319).

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the Son of God is of our (human) nature, so are we of His substance; and as He hath us in Himself, so also have we Him, in us."¹ Furthermore, Christ is our head, but as the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3), Chrysostom concludes that ultimately the Father is our head.² Thus, in the Spirit we are united to Christ, and through Christ to the Father.

There are other indications that this Spirit is at work within us. According to the Apostle's words to the Romans this Spirit "bears witness . . . that we are sons of God" (Romans 8:16). In his commentary on these words, Chrysostom wonders how anyone can doubt this. He argues that when someone is selected for an honour by the emperor and the announcement is made, no one attempts to contradict it. Much less should we doubt the dignity of our sonship, since God bestows the gift and God testifies to it.

For if it were a man, or angel, or archangel, or any other such power that promised this, then there might be reason in doubting. But when it is the Highest Essence that bestoweth this gift, and "beareth witness" by the very words He bade us use in prayer, who would doubt any more of our dignity? For not even when the emperor elects anyone, and proclaims in all men's hearing the honor done him, does anybody venture to gainsay.³

¹Chrysostom, On Ephesians 20:30-31 (LFC 6:319-320).

²Chrysostom, On Ephesians 20:31 (LFC 6:320).

³Chrysostom, On Romans 14:16 (NPNF 11:442).

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It is the Spirit who inspires us to address God as "Father." St. Paul wrote: "You have received the Spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father"

(Romans 8:15). Chrysostom comments on this passage by referring to the liturgy of baptism as practised in his time. As soon as the newly baptized came up from the font, they chanted the Lord's Prayer. St. Chrysostom compares this first Our Father of the spiritually reborn to the first cry of a new-born babe.

This is the first language we give utterance to, after those marvelous throes, and that strange and unusual mode of labor. . . . Those in the state of grace do it through being moved by the inworking of the Spirit. For as there is a spirit of wisdom . . . so also a spirit of adoption . . . whereby he that is gifted with it calleth God "Father" as moved by the Spirit . . . not only "Father" but "Abba! Father!"¹

Thus, the role of the Spirit in baptism is seen in that He is the gift by which we are made sons. Like the prodigal son who received a portion of the inheritance from

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 14:15 (NPNF 11:442). Unger's Bible Dictionary says that the title "Abba" was in common use in the mixed Aramaic dialect of Palestine. It was used by children in addressing their father and answers to our "papa" (p. 2). St. Chrysostom says that the Apostle used the Hebrew tongue because he wanted to express that the baptized were truly children of God, the Father: "Wishing to express this as a most true descent, . . . he (Paul) used the Hebrew tongue, for he does not say only 'Father,' but 'Abba, Father' which name is a special sign of true-born children to their fathers." (Chrysostom, On Romans 14:15 (NPNF 11:442).

his father, we receive a part of our heavenly inheritance in the Spirit. Like the dove at the Flood, He brings deliverance and hope. Like the dove at the Jordan He comes, not with an olive branch of peace but with adoption, inspiring the new born child to recognize its Father and cry our "Abba, Father." It is the Spirit who joins us to Christ and through Christ to the Father.

Adoption and Man's Act of Faith

In stressing the role of the Three Divine Persons in adoption, St. Chrysostom does not overlook man's part. He tells us that man must provide the faith.¹ Christ, Himself, spoke to Nicodemus of a new birth that takes place in baptism. It is a birth "of the Spirit" (John 3:6) and must be accepted in faith. St. Chrysostom advises us to believe in the regenerating power of baptism on the word of Christ: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).² In his commentary on St. John's Gospel, Chrysostom reminds us that all who accept the Word Incarnate and "believe in His name" receive the power to become "sons of God" (John 1:12), while those who reject Him forfeit this power and deliverately deprive

¹Chrysostom, On John 10 (FC 33:101).

²Chrysostom, On John 25 (FC 33:246).

themselves of this "noble lineage and honor."¹

Commenting on the Pauline text (Romans 4:17) which refers to Abraham as the father of many nations, St. Chrysostom relates the idea to God the Father. Chrysostom comments that God is the Father of all people not just some; "God is not the God of a part, but the Father of all."² The saint proceeds to say that Abraham, too, is the father of all. Then, he explains that this relationship is a consequence of faith. Any man is father of his offspring, but in regard to God the extraordinary thing is that those who do not belong to Him by nature, He receives by the "gift of God", that is by faith. It was when Abraham obeyed the call to faith that he became the father of all who answer that call. It is when we obey the call to faith that we receive the grace to become sons and have God as our Father.³

In his commentary on Galatians, Chrysostom recalls that St. Paul reminded these Gentile converts that it was faith and not the Law that made them "sons of God" (Galatians 3:26). "Notice!" the saint insists, "How mighty is the power of faith. It first made them sons of Abraham--now it makes them sons of God."⁴

¹Chrysostom, On John 10 (FC 33:99).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 8:17 (LFC 7:122).

³Chrysostom, On Romans 8:16-17 (LFC 7:122).

⁴Chrysostom, On Galatians 3:26 (NPNF 13:29).

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Explaining the Apostle's words to the Ephesians (1:14), Chrysostom says that the seal of circumcision which the Israelites received resembled that of brutes and irrational creatures. Those who believe in Christ, however, are sealed "with the Spirit" (Ephesians 1:14). They are sealed as sons.¹

Thus, faith is a necessary condition for receiving the grace of sonship.

In the first centuries of the Church most of those admitted to baptism were adults. They had to undergo a long period of preparation before receiving the sacrament. At one point in their preparation they were taught the Creed, with its explicit doctrine of the Three Divine Persons. Chrysostom remarks: "It is faith in this Trinity which gives the grace of remission from sin; it is this confession which gives to us the gift of filial adoption."² Elsewhere, he asserts that it is to the believer, to the "faithful," that God entrusts "justification, sanctification, purity of soul, and filial adoption."³

In his baptismal instructions, however, Chrysostom does not seem to state precisely when the catechumens of

¹Chrysostom, On Ephesians 2:14 (NPNF 13:56).

²John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 2:26 (ACW 31:53). Cf. supra, p. 20, note 3.

³Ibid., 12:6 (ACW 31:175).

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Antioch recited back the Creed,¹ but he does hint that it was before the actual ceremony of baptism. After explaining to the catechumens the meaning of the name "faithful" he says: "I entrust nothing else to you until you shall say "I believe."²

The saint, however, is specific in describing an agreement which the catechumen made with Christ. He refers to this compact as a "contract of faith."³ After the renunciation of Satan, his pomps, and his works, the catechumen was asked to promise adherence to Christ by saying: "I enter into thy service, O Christ." In return the Master bestowed spiritual blessings on the candidate. This contract was "not written on paper, nor in ink; it was in God and written by the Spirit."⁴

Immediately after this compact, the catechumen was requested by the priest to make a strong confession of faith in Christ.⁵ Both the contract and the confession of faith in Christ's sovereignty were asked of each "one by one."⁶

¹John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions (ACW 31:222), note 39.

²Ibid., 11:15 (ACW 31:165).

³Ibid., 2:17 (ACW 31:50).

⁴Ibid., 2:17-21 (ACW 31:50-51).

⁵Ibid., 1:19 (ACW 31:30).

⁶Ibid., 2:18 (ACW 31:50).

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It was a personal commitment to serve Christ freely.

Chrysostom tells us this when he has Christ say: "Unless you are grateful, and are willing of yourself and of your own accord to be enrolled under Me as your Master, I do not force or compel you."¹ It was only after this commitment and confession that the catechumen was admitted to actual baptism. Here, he was justified by the regeneration of the laver, glorified by grace, and by the adoption as sons.²

Faith in the Trinity, more specifically faith in the incarnate Son of God and in His word, is a prerequisite for baptism and its consequent grace of adoption.

Although St. Chrysostom sees baptismal adoption as a work of the undivided Trinity, he also recognizes it as from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. Man, too, must contribute his share by responding to the divine call by his act of faith.

Thus far, in our thesis, it is clear that in Chrysostom's thought the baptized are really sons of God. However, the saint makes a distinction in the use of the term son as applied to Christ and to us. In doing this, he follows Holy Scripture which, he informs us, often applies "the same words both to God and to men, though not in the

¹John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 12:50 (ACW 31:188).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 15:30 (NPNF 11:453).

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same sense."¹ Let us, therefore, consider this distinction further.

¹Chrysostom, On John 75 (FC 41:305).

CHAPTER III

THE STATE OF THE ADOPTED

Distinction Between Divine and Adoptive Sonship

Commenting on the reply of Christ to the Jews who accused Him of blasphemy when He proclaimed Himself the "Son of God" (John 10:36), Chrysostom asks the following question: "If those who have received this prerogative by grace are not reproved when they call themselves gods, how would it be right to find fault with Him who possesses it by nature?"¹ Again, Chrysostom points out that the Evangelist uses the definite article before the word "Son" (John 1:18), lest anyone think Christ is one of the sons who have become so by grace.² On another occasion the saint accuses his listeners of implicitly denying the divine natural sonship of Christ because they erroneously maintain that Christ is not the Son of God by nature, but that like us He has shared in the adoption of sons by grace. He puts the following questions to them: "Will you strive with the Only-begotten about sonship, and will you say that He has nothing more than you in this regard?" Then Chrysostom replies: "By no

¹Chrysostom, On John 61 (FC 41:157).

²Chrysostom, On John 15 (FC 33:147).

means."¹

Christ, then, is the Son of God by nature; we are sons by grace. With this statement in mind, we shall, for the sake of clarity and accuracy, consider further some teachings of Chrysostom concerning Christ, the natural Son of the Father, and ourselves, the adopted sons by grace.

Christ, the Natural Son of God

That there is only one true Son of God by nature, Chrysostom clearly teaches. He says that "the Word" (John 1:1) was truly begotten,² that He is the only-begotten Son of God who proceeds from the Father effortlessly,³ and that He was begotten of the Father Himself without passion, that is, without suffering, damage, or loss.⁴ This only-begotten Son is co-eternal with the Father for "the Father was never without the Word but always God was God, though each in His own person."⁵

An explanation that Chrysostom uses illustrates that there is no gap between the Son and the Father. He portrays

¹Chrysostom, On John 3 (FC 33:31).

²Chrysostom, On John 3 (FC 33:36).

³Chrysostom, On John 2 (FC 33:20-21).

⁴Chrysostom, On Colossians 5:5 (NPNF 13:283).

⁵Chrysostom, On John 4 (FC 33:46).

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that sunlight comes from the sun, not from another substance. Even though it has its origin in the sun, it can never be said to be subsequent to it, since the sun has never appeared without its light. But, he concludes, if in visible bodies something appears to have its origin in something else and is not subsequent to it, there should not be any doubt that this same thing is true in the case of "the invisible and ineffable Nature." Hence, if there is no gap, then the Son is co-eternal with the Father.¹

Furthermore, Chrysostom explains that the Son is not only begotten of the Father from all eternity, but also that He is completely identical in nature with the Father. In human birth, there is a likeness in respect of substance. The son is like his father. The son, too, may be like his father in many accidental ways, but there are also many ways in which he differs. But, Chrysostom informs us that in the divine essence there is no such dissimilarity.² The Son is of the same substance as the Father but has His own person. Chrysostom remarks that the Father "begot Him not inferior in substance but equal and not of another substance."³ Again, "everything that the Father is, the Son is also,

¹Chrysostom, On John 4 (FC 33:47).

²Chrysostom, On 1 Timothy 1:1 (NPNF 13:409).

³Chrysostom, On Philippians 7:9-11 (NPNF 13:26).

though He has been begotten and remains in the condition of Son."¹

In time, this eternally generated Son of God, who has "perfect agreement and conformity of substance"² with the Father became man: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). As man, He had a virgin mother, but no human father. Chrysostom says: "He was born of a virgin, without the agent of a man."³ The saint informs us that in this "later generation" the incarnate Son of God is the first of the Church, because He is the head of His Body, the Church. He further explains that in this context the Church signifies the human race.⁴ Although Christ is of the same essence as those with whom He is "first-born" (Colossians 1:15), He is not created. He is the Creator.⁵ He is the Son and true God who makes us gods and sons. St. Chrysostom asks: "How does He make us gods and son, if He is not true God?"⁶

¹Chrysostom, On John 38 (FC 33:386). Cf. Chrysostom, On Matthew 54:3 (NPNF 10:333); Ibid., 55:5 (NPNF 10:341); Ibid., 56:5 (NPNF 10:348); Chrysostom, On John 15 (FC 33:146); Ibid., 3 (FC 33:37-38).

²Chrysostom, On Colossians 5:5 (NPNF 13:283).

³Chrysostom, On John 15 (FC 33:146).

⁴Chrysostom, On Colossians 3:15-17 (NPNF 13:271).

⁵Chrysostom, On Colossians 3:15-18 (NPNF 13:270-271).

⁶Chrysostom, On John 80 (FC 41:371).

Having seen what Chrysostom means precisely by Christ being the true Son of God, we can now better appreciate our own adoptive sonship.

Sons of God by Grace

St. Chrysostom recalls that our filial relationship with the Father differs greatly from that of Christ's. Christ is "of the Father, as a true Son, that is, of His substance; we, as created, that is, brought out of the things that are not."¹ We do not enjoy this honour by nature; we have it as a favour from God the Father: "God the Father has given us every spiritual blessing gratuitously in Christ."² Contemplating the text: "Those whom He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29), Chrysostom exclaims: "See what a superb honor! We become by grace what the Only-begotten is by nature."³

In St. Paul's time, many Christian converts in Galatia had become unfaithful. The Apostle found it necessary to

¹ Chrysostom, On Hebrews 4:5 (NPNF 14:384).

² Chrysostome, Aux Ephésiens 1:1 (BAR 18:172).

³ Chrysostom, On Romans 15:29 (NPNF 11:453). Matthias Scheeben expresses the same idea: "Although we are not by nature children of God, we become such through grace, and so true is this that as adopted children we are put on a par with the natural Son of God. We become by grace what He is by nature. What He has in Himself, that we obtain through participation in His nature." Matthias Scheeben, The Glories of Divine Grace, Part II, chapter 4, p. 42.

rebuke the Jewish converts who still observed parts of the Mosaic Law and the Gentile converts who worshipped false gods. They were in danger of losing the grace they had acquired, so St. Paul prays that grace may reign in them anew: "Grace and peace be to you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:3). Chrysostom comments at length on these words. "From the Father" should have made them remember that they had become children of God in the bath of regeneration and not by the Law. By returning to their former religious practices, they withdrew from God's family. Hence, St. Chrysostom wonders how they could have had the courage to speak to the Father.

Having fallen into slavery, become enemies, separated from the family, how do you dare to call God your Father? Is it really the Law which has transmitted that filiation to you? Why then, deserting the one¹ to whom you owe it, do you return to your old tutor?

Chrysostom continues to tell us that S. Paul used the appellation "Our Father" repeatedly in writing to the Galatians. While showing them that Christ has made His Father our Father, he hoped to arouse in them a feeling of shame for their conduct. Anyone who outraged the Father did the same to the Son and vice versa. Grace does not come from the Son alone; it also comes from the Father. He calls us into the

¹Chrysostome, Aux Galates 1:3 (BAR 18:66).

grace of Christ.¹

In another chapter of the same epistle, St. Chrysostom comments that it is absurd and stupid to desert the grace by which we are made sons.

We would not have been able to give Him the name Father, if we had not obtained the dignity of sons. If then grace hath made us freemen instead of slaves, men instead of children, heirs and sons instead of aliens, is it not utter absurdity and stupidity to desert this grace and to turn away backwards? . . . It was not by your own pains that ye found out God, but while ye continued in error, He drew you to Himself.²

Again, in his commentary on St. John's Gospel, Chrysostom advises us to realize the value and nobility of our second birth, which is of grace, and to conceive a great esteem for it.³ Elsewhere, he comments that if God the Father has us pleasing in His sight for the honour and glory of His grace, if He has given it in order to manifest it, then we ought to remain in that grace.⁴

Thus, regenerated in baptism, men become by the grace of God what they are not by nature--sons of God.

¹Chrysostome, Aux Galates 1:5 (BAR 18:70-72).

²Chrysostome, Aux Galates 4:1 (BAR 18:129).

³Chrysostom, On John 10 (FC 33:101-102).

⁴Chrysostome, Aux Ephésiens 1:3 (BAR 18:176).

Brothers of Christ

One of the magnificent consequences of adoption is that it makes us brothers of Christ. There is no doubt about this in the mind of Chrysostom. In his commentary on St. John's Gospel we read: "God makes us His sons and brothers of the only-begotten Son."¹ This latter idea is expressed in greater detail in his commentary on Hebrews. Here, St. Chrysostom says that "because Christ who sanctifies and we who are sanctified are 'all of one' (that is have life from the Father), Christ is not ashamed to call us 'brethren' (Hebrews 2:11)."² He continues to explain that when Christ took "blood and flesh" (Hebrews 2:14), the same as any child, He honoured us by establishing the brotherhood: "For when Christ clothed Himself with flesh, He clothed Himself also with the brotherhood and at the same time came in the brotherhood."³

In another homily of the same commentary, St. Chrysostom teaches that Christ wanted to become our brother, so He left heaven and became man.

He that is so great; He that is "the brightness of the Father's glory" (Hebrews 1:3); He that is the "express image of His person" (ibid.); He that "made the world"

¹Chrysostom, On John 79 (FC 41:363).

²Chrysostom, On Hebrews 4:5 (NPNF 14:384).

³Ibid.

(Hebrews 1:2); He that sitteth on the right hand of the Father" (Hebrews 1:3); He was willing and earnest to become our brother, in all things; and for this cause did He leave the angels and other powers, and came down to us, and took hold of us, and wrought innumerable good things. He destroyed Death, He cast out the devil from his tyranny, He freed us from bondage.¹

Not only does Christ honour us by becoming our brother but also by giving Himself to us as food. St. Chrysostom tells us that in this respect His love surpasses the love of parents who often entrust their children to others to be fed. The saint informs us that Christ, who wished to become our brother, after assuming flesh and blood, gave back again to us the "very Flesh and Blood" through which He had become our kinsman.² In a very real way He made it possible for us to be "commingled with Him."³ Moreover, when we partake of this food the very life that Christ received from the Father flows into us. By it, the initiated, that is the baptized, live a "blessed life" and hope to live it eternally--the life of the Son of God.⁴

Despite this close union with Christ our brother, St. Chrysostom insists that Christ possesses a dignity immeasurably greater than ours. Commenting on Christ's words to

¹Chrysostom, On Hebrews 5:1 (NPNF 14:389).

²Chrysostom, On John 46 (FC 33:469).

³Ibid.

⁴Chrysostom, On John 47 (FC 33:474).

Mary Magdalen: "Go to my brethren, and say to them: I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God" (John 20:17), Chrysostom first asks: "Is the Father His Father in one way, and ours in another?" Then, he answers his own question:

Of course He is. For, if He is the God of the just in a way different from the rest of men, much more truly is this so of the Son and of us. By saying "Tell my brethren" He was pointing out the difference in their relationship, lest they conjure up some idea of His and their equality by reason of His other words. He Himself would indeed sit on the throne of His Father, while they would be allowed to stand near it. So that, even if He did become our brother as far as to become flesh, there is a great difference in dignity, and it is not even possible to say how great the difference is.

Christ became our brother when He became man; yet, this was not enough to satisfy His love for us. He even nourishes us with Himself. Our sharing in His life does not make us His equals. There is always an immeasurable difference between us.

Sons of Holy Mother Church

We have already seen that those who have been reborn in baptism have God as a Father.² We shall now consider the role the Church has to play in this regeneration.

¹Chrysostom, On John 86 (FC 41:450).

²Cf. supra, p. 11, note 1.

St. John Chrysostom compares the role of the Church to that of a mother. He sees the Church become a Mother on Calvary. He says that just as Eve was formed from the side of Adam while he was in a deep sleep, so the Church was formed from the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ after He died on the Cross. In this act, the Church became united to Christ as His Bride.¹ As such, She brings forth many children in the waters of baptism.²

This image of the Church as a mother is contained in several of Chrysostom's baptismal instructions. In speaking to a group of catechumens, the saint explains that although the grace, given to them and to those who postpone it until the hour of death, is the same; yet, there is a difference in the choice of place. The latter receive baptism in their beds, but the former receive it in the bosom of the "common Mother of us all, the Church."³

Elsewhere, witnessing the large numbers to which the Church gave birth on Easter night, Chrysostom exclaims: "Consider the excess of Her love. See how many children this spiritual Mother has brought forth suddenly and in a single

¹ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 3:17-18 (ACW 31:62).

² Cf. infra, p. 52, note 1.

³ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 9:5 (ACW 31:133).

night!"¹

In a final instruction to the catechumens, Chrysostom suggests that they pray for peace for holy Mother Church: "Ask Him, in behalf of the common Mother of us all, that She be neither in tumult nor disturbed."²

Again, the saint urges the newly baptized who are present at his instruction to pass on his words to those Christians who have absented themselves in order to attend the chariot races and the theatre. Chrysostom feels completely convinced that they will do this because they have a deep affection for their fellow members. In their love, they will hasten to lead back their wayward brothers to their common Mother, the Church.³

In a discourse against the Jews, Chrysostom speaks of the Church as mothering her own and extending her embrace to strangers.⁴

In his commentary on both Galatians and Romans, St. Chrysostom sees in Sara, the mother of Isaac, a type of Mother Church. Although Sara was barren and desolate she

¹ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 4:1 (ACW 31:66).

² Ibid., 11:31 (ACW 31:171).

³ Ibid., 6:20 (ACW 31:101).

⁴ Chrysostome, Contre les Juifs 1:1 (BAR 2:353). Cf. Thomas Hilton, "Some Images of the Church in St. John Chrysostom," American Ecclesiastical Review, CLIII (August, 1965), 104.

became the mother of Isaac, and in his seed she became the mother of many children. At one time, like Sara, the Gentile Church was barren and desolate. Before Christ came She did not know God, but as soon as She knew Him She brought forth children surpassing in numbers the fruitful Synagogue.

Chrysostom says that the children of the New Law, the children of the Church, filled the whole habitable world, while the children of the Old Law embraced only one nation.¹

For St. Chrysostom, the joy that the Church experiences when She beholds a new group of neophytes is similar to that experienced by a loving mother who is surrounded by her children. In the opening of a baptismal instruction he says:

I see that your gathering is brighter than usual today and the Church is rejoicing over Her children. A loving mother rejoices when she sees her children surrounding her; she exults and is borne along on the wings of her joy. So, too, that spiritual Mother, the Church, looks on her children, rejoices, and is glad when She sees herself as a fertile field lush and green with this spiritual crop.²

In like manner, all who are present participate in the joy of their Mother. St. Chrysostom tells us that he,

¹Chrysostom, On Galatians 4:26-27 (LFC 6:70-71).

²John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 4:1 (ACW 31:66). Thomas Hilton shows that St. John Chrysostom applied the name "Mother" to the Church. Among other quotations, he uses the above quotation in part. Thomas Hilton, "Some Images of the Church in St. John Chrysostom," The American Ecclesiastical Review, CLIII (August, 1965), 104.

himself, embraced his new brothers.¹ He also describes how the newly baptized were welcomed by the other members of the Church.

As soon as thy come forth from these sacred waters, all who are present embrace them, greet them, kiss them, rejoice with them, and congratulate them, because those who were heretofore slaves and captives have suddenly become freemen, and sons and have been invited to the royal table.²

Elsewhere, St. Chrysostom has a similar passage where he contrasts the joys of the newly-baptized with the cries of a new-born babe. He says:

There are no tears here, no laments, but greetings, kisses, and embracings of brothers who recognize their own member and receive him as if he had returned from a long journey.

¹ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 4:3 (ACW 31: 67).

² Ibid., 2:27 (ACW 31:53). Chrysostom speaks elsewhere in his instructions of a "sacred kiss" or a "holy greeting" which the faithful gave each other before participating in the Sacred Table. He sees this liturgical kiss of peace as particularly significant. It is a sign of the bond of love which ought to exist among the faithful, who are temples of Christ, having been made so by the Holy Spirit. Ibid., 11: 32, 34 (ACW 31:171-172).

³ Joannes Chrysostomus, In principio actorum 3:6 (MG 51: 98A). "Sunt nusquam lamenta, nusquam lacrymae hic, sed salutationes et oscula, et amplexus fratrum qui suum membrum agnoscunt, et tanquam ex longinqua reversum peregrinatione recipiunt." Antoine Wenger uses this text to justify his decision that the kiss given to the newly baptized as soon as they came out of the water is not the liturgical kiss of peace. Jean Chrysostome, Huit catéchèses baptismales, trans. Antoine Wenger (SCH 50), p. 148, note 3.

Thus, holy Mother Church, the children already born, and those newly born rejoice together. From the above, it is evident that in Chrysostom's thought the baptized have the Church as a Mother. Let us consider further some of his commentaries on this spiritual relationship.

Brothers to All Christians

St. John Chrysostom sees the baptized as spiritual brothers and members of the same family.¹ This is why Chrysostom sometimes uses the word "brother" in his sermons when he is referring to a Christian; this is why he addresses the neophytes as his "dearly beloved brothers."² This is the reason, too, for inviting the monks from the countryside of Antioch, who favour the city folk with a visit, to a baptismal instruction. He claims that it is a matter of hospitality to extend such an invitation, for they are "our brothers and truly members of the body of the Church."³

Chrysostom goes so far as to say that members of the same natural family are not real kinsman unless they have been baptized. Because they are separated from the "heavenly relationship," they are strangers to each other. Hence, he

¹Chrysostom, On John 82 (FC 41:395).

²John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 3:7 (ACW 31:57).

³Ibid., 8:1 (ACW 31:119).

urges those who have not been baptized to do everything to become worthy, so that there may be one body and so that all may be brethren.¹ The saint asks:

What help is there in being united in our earthly family, if we are not bound together by the spiritual one? And what profit is there from close kinship upon earth, if we are strangers in heaven?²

Thus, for Chrysostom, there is no closer bond of fellowship than that produced by the grace of baptism.

Spiritual Brotherhood Eliminating Natural Differences

When God makes us His sons by grace, St. Chrysostom tells us that He "exterminates the inequality of human things."³ We all receive the same spiritual gifts: we have the same Father; we pass through the same spiritual birth-pains; we become the same body; we receive the same grace by drinking the same Spirit.⁴ Similarly, in a homily on Ephesians, Chrysostom explains in what way we are equally noble: "To all He hath freely given immortality, to all eternal life, to all immortal glory, to all the brotherhood,

¹ Chrysostom, On John 25 (FC 33:248).

² Ibid.

³ Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:6 (NPNF 10:134).

⁴ Chrysostom, On 1 Corinthians 30:2 (NPNF 12:176).

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to all inheritance (Ephesians 2:6).¹ Likewise, in a baptismal instruction he teaches that differences among men have no place in "the world of the spirit"² where every distinction is cancelled.

The rich man may not look down on the poor man, nor the poor man consider that he has any less than the rich man; for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, there is no Scythian, no barbarian, no Jew, no Greek (Galatians 3:28); not only is there no difference of age or nature, but even every difference of honor is canceled out; there is one esteem for all, one gift, one brotherhood binding us together, the same grace.³

Because Christians are brothers, Chrysostom advises the neophytes of Antioch to embrace their visitors from the countryside, thereby manifesting a genuine love for them. The language difference should be no barrier. He says: "Let us note carefully the true doctrine of their soul and not their barbarous tongue."⁴

Even slavery has a different perspective in the light of supernatural brotherhood. Chrysostom regards the slave

¹ Chrysostom, On Ephesians 4:6 (NPNF 13:102).

² John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 2:3 (ACW 31:48).

³ Ibid., 11:21 (ACW 31:167).

⁴ Ibid., 8:2 (ACW 31:120). Paul Harkins says that Greek was the language spoken at Antioch. The monks from the countryside of Antioch spoke Syriac. John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions (ACW 31:281), note 4.

not only as his master's brother but also as Christ's brother. He portrays this spiritual relationship in his commentary of St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon. In the time of St. Paul slavery was an accepted thing. Onesimus, a fugitive slave belonging to Philemon was baptized by Paul. Thus, he became spiritually a brother both of Paul and of Philemon. On this ground, Paul beseeches Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to accept him back. He remarks that Philemon has lost a slave for a short time, but he will have a brother forever (Philemon 1:15-16). Complimenting Paul for calling Onesimus a brother, Chrysostom identifies the slave as a brother of Christ:

The Master of Paul is not ashamed to call our servants His own brethren; and we are ashamed! See how he honors us; He calls our servants His own brethren, friends, and fellow-heirs. See to what He has descended. . . . For consider whatever thou doest, thou doest to thy fellow-servant, but thy Master hath done it to thy servants.¹

Chrysostom expresses a similar thought in his commentary on Ephesians where he teaches that the slave is a brother not only of his master, but also of the Son of God. He partakes of the same privileges as his master.² Hence, in his commentary on Romans the saint considers it foolish to

¹ Chrysostom, On Philemon 2:15-16 (NPNF 13:552).

² Chrysostome, Aux Ephésiens 22:1 (BAR 18:412).

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let earthly interests be the criteria for distinguishing those whom God has rendered equal in regard to eternal interests.

Now if everything is common between servants and masters when it is a question of the most necessary blessings of spiritual wealth, as the love of God, the call, the Gospel, the adoption, the grace, the peace, the sanctification, and other things of the same kind, is it not extreme folly to distinguish with regard to earthly interests those whom God has rendered equal and¹ brought together in regard to eternal interests.

In another commentary, Chrysostom says: "When we are all knit together, no harm can come to anyone because of his social status."² Thus, the doctrine of our supernatural brotherhood can be socially fruitful.

Sons of the Father and brothers of Christ by grace, the baptized have the Church as a Mother and all other Christians as brothers.

¹Chrysostome, Aux Romans 1:3 (BAR 15:451).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:6 (NPNF 10:134).

CHAPTER IV

LIVING ACCORDING TO ADOPTION

St. Chrysostom sees filial adoption as a gift which God entrusts to our keeping.¹ But "we need to exert a great deal of effort so that the image of sonship, impressed on us in baptism, may remain entirely unsullied and intact."² However, as long as we will to do so, we can retain the dignity received in baptism and even increase the honour by the practice of virtue.³ If we are negligent in the pursuit of virtue; if we do not will to be led by the Spirit, the saint declares that we lose our dignity and the pre-eminence of our adoption.⁴ Out of the "abundance"⁵ of practical advice that Chrysostom gave in his sermons, this section will present some of his recommendations on the virtues that befit sons of God and brothers of Christ; for, he says, "We become sons of God first by grace and then by the practice

¹ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 12:6 (ACW 31:175).

² Chrysostom, On John 10 (FC 33:100-101).

³ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 5:22-23 (ACW 89-90).

⁴ Chrysostom, On Romans 14:14 (NPNF 11:441).

⁵ Chrysostomus Baur, John Chrysostom and His Time, I (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1959), p. 386.

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of virtue."¹ From his commentaries on the New Law of the Spirit as taught by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6), and as preached by St. Paul (Romans 8), as well as from his other works, a number of passages have been selected to show that, after their noble birth, sons of the Father ought to obey the teachings of the only Son and imitate His way of Life. First, however, let us consider what St. Chrysostom has to say concerning the dignity of the name we bear: Christians and sons of God.²

In the Old Testament God sometimes assigned a name to individuals. Those who were destined to be outstanding in virtue from their earliest days received the name at birth; others received it later in life. Furthermore, these names were handed down to posterity as a memorial of God's loving kindness. But in each case the name differed. In the New Law, no such distinction is made at baptism. We are all called by the same name: Christians and sons of God.³ St. Chrysostom asks us to "ponder and reverence the greatness of our name."⁴ In ordinary life, anyone who has the name of a famous person or who belongs to a distinguished family endeavors to uphold the honour of the one whose name he

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 19:34-35 (NPNF 11:495).

²Chrysostom, On John 19 (FC 33:191).

³Chrysostom, On John 19 (FC 33:190-191).

⁴Chrysostom, On John 19 (FC 33:191).

bears. Chrysostom tells us to do nothing unworthy of the name of Christ which we bear¹ and to do nothing unworthy of our relationship with our Father.² We shall now consider some virtues that he recommends.

Trusting in the Father's Care

Desirous to have us put complete trust in divine providence, St. Chrysostom advises us to give spiritual things priority. Then we shall have no trouble with material things.³ He gives several reasons to show this is so.

First, the affection of our heavenly Father surpasses that of any earthly father, and surpasses it "as far as goodness doth this evil nature."⁴ Earthly fathers provide for the needs of their children; our heavenly Father will not forsake us, His children, in time of need. He will not be less generous, less loving, than earthly fathers. "For what kind of a father is he," asks Chrysostom, "who can endure to fail in supplying to his children even necessities?"⁵

¹Chrysostom, On John 19 (FC 33:191).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 19:34-35 (LFC 7:357).

³Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 8:19 (ACW 31:127).

⁴Chrysostom, On Matthew 23:5 (NPNF 10:161). Cf. On Matthew 22:5 (LFC 11:337).

⁵Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:3 (LFC 11:333).

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Secondly, the saint states that God is the "Artificer, the Framer"¹ of our nature. He knows it perfectly. He knows it perfectly. He knows its wants better than we do ourselves, hence He will provide it with its needs. "He who by His own loving-kindness," says Chrysostom, "brought us out of nothing into being, will after giving us being, be all the more careful to take every thought for our well-being."² Then, he exhorts that since we know how good our Master is, we should abandon ourselves completely to Him, and not be too concerned about earthly wealth.³

Next, St. Chrysostom points out that the just men of the Old Law were able to detach themselves from mundane things and devote themselves to the spiritual. He also recalls that although the pagans were not motivated by love, even some of them practised poverty. The saint laments the fact that Christians who should do more than those under the Old Law, do not even do as much as the philosophers among the heathens. He exclaims:

What shall we say, who when we ought to be angels and sons of God, do not even quite maintain our being as

¹ Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:3 (LFC 11:333).

² John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 8:19 (ACW 31:128).

³ Ibid.

men? . . . To covet does not belong to the gentleness of men.¹

Then, he concludes that what was possible for other just men is likewise possible for us.

Finally, St. Chrysostom goes one step further, and presents as models of trust in God the Father, irrational creatures.² This is in accordance with the teachings of Christ who said: "Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns; yet, your heavenly Father feeds them" (Matthew 6:26). God feeds them without any thought or labor on their part, observes Chrysostom. Hence, he argues that since irrational creatures exist for us and God bestows so much care and thought on them, He will bestow much greater on us for whose sake He gave up His only-begotten Son.³

Referring to the "grass" and the "lilies of the field" (Matthew 6:28, 30), St. Chrysostom uses a similar line of reasoning. He tells us that the natural beauty of the grass is more precious than any costly apparel, and that "Solomon in all his glory" could not surpass the beauty of the lily.⁴ Here, too, as in the case of the birds, the saint remarks

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 21:6 (LFC 11:328).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 21:4 (LFC 11:325).

³Ibid. Cf. Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:1 (LFC 11:331).

⁴Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:1 (LFC 11:330).

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that the loving care which God the Father sheds on the flowers, even though they will eventually be gathered and burned, will certainly be shed more profusely on man.¹

Moved by such a display of loving-kindness on God's part, St. Chrysostom says:

If then to the grass He hath given that which it needs, how shall He not give unto thee that which thou needst? If that which is the vilest of all things, He hath lavishly adorned, and that as doing it not for need, but for munificence, how much more will He honor thee, the most honorable of all things, in matters which are of necessity!²

In the mind of Chrysostom, too much solicitude for bodily comforts should not be of primary importance. Since we are on our way to heaven, God does not want us to be anxious even about necessary things. He simply wants us to be free from "secondary cares,"³ so that we may acquire virtue, avoid sin, and enjoy the blessings of eternal life, for "we were not born for this end, that we should eat and drink and be clothed, but that we might please God."⁴ If we put first things first, our Father who knows our corporal needs will provide them even without our asking: "For your

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:1 (LFC 11:331).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:3 (LFC 11:334).

³John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 8:24 (ACW 31:129).

⁴Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:4 (LFC 11:334).

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Father who is in heaven knows that you need all these things before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:32, 8).¹ Hence, St. Chrysostom beseeches us to trust in God's providence and not to be anxious about material sustenance.

One on the point of going to a plentiful feast, will not surely permit himself to take thought for food; nor is he that is walking to a fountain anxious about drink. Therefore, seeing we have a supply more copious than either any fountain, or innumerable banquets made ready, the providence of God; let us not be beggars, nor little-minded, for if we "seek the kingdom of heaven, all things else shall be added unto us" (Matthew 6:33).²

St. Chrysostom, then, emphasizes that our heavenly Father provides tenderly and wisely for all His creatures, both rational and irrational. The latter leave themselves entirely in their Father's hands. We, too, should manifest a similar trust and accomplish by an act of choice what animals do by nature.³

Praying to the Father with Filial Confidence

Although the Father provides lovingly for His children, St. Chrysostom states that we must do our part by "asking, seeking, and knocking" (Matthew 7:7) for the right

¹ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 8:19 (ACW 31:128).

² Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:1 (LFC 11:331).

³ Chrysostom, On Matthew 21:4 (LFC 11:325).

things and with the proper dispositions.¹ This, he adds, is even what earthly fathers expect their children to do.² They wait for their sons to ask. Then, if the request is expedient, they grant it; if it is not, they refuse it, for no father will give his child what is harmful. The status of sonship is no guarantee that a father will bestow what is asked. In fact, it is this very status that motivates the father's refusal when the petition is not profitable for his child. Chrysostom remarks that the child is refused because he has asked for a stone and not for bread (Matthew 7:9). He concludes that our heavenly Father, who loves us more than any earthly father, will answer our prayers when we approach Him with love and request spiritual things, worthy of our noble status.³ This, Chrysostom tells us, is the method taught by Christ and found in the Lord's Prayer.⁴

The saint's commentaries on the Our Father indicate some of the favours which he considered "worthy of bestowal by the Giver and expedient for the petitioner."⁵ These are presented in the following section.

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 23:5 (LFC 11:351).

²Ibid.

³Chrysostom, On Matthew 23:5 (LFC 11:351). Cf. Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:11 (NPNF 10:137); Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:7 (NPNF 10:134).

⁴Chrysostom, On Matthew 23:6 (LFC 11:353).

⁵Chrysostom, On Matthew 23:5 (LFC 11:351).

Petitions Worthy of an Adopted Son

Praise is our first and foremost duty to our Father; before we ask for anything else, we should pray that our way of life may give glory to Him. St. Chrysostom proclaims:

Worthy of him who calls God Father, is the prayer to ask nothing before the glory of his Father, but to account all things secondary to the work of praising Him.¹

He adds that Christ commanded this when He said: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Everything that we do and say should be so irreprehensible that everyone with whom we come in contact should be inspired to offer to the Lord the praise that is due to Him for this. "Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9) is a petition worthy of him who calls God "Father".²

Now, any "right-minded" child, Chrysostom informs us, anxiously hastens to his Father and longs for the things of heaven.³ He is not "rivetted" to earthly things, nor does he attach too high a value to them. His affection for his Father is so strong that he is neither elated by the good things of life nor dejected by its sorrows. Provided his

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:7 (NPNF 10:134).

²Ibid. Cf. John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 4:21 (ACW 31:74).

³Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:7 (NPNF 10:134)

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conscience is good and he is spiritually detached, he is able to be indifferent to life's events. To long for the things of heaven, and to hasten there every day by angelic living, are things that Christ bade us to do. Chrysostom urges that these favours be made the object of our prayers.¹ As a motivating force, he tells us that St. Paul longed for heaven daily. This is why he said, "Even we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan, waiting for an adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).²

In Chrysostom's mind, to act here on earth as if we were already in heaven is not an impossibility. There, the angels do God's will perfectly and not by halves. "There, all things are done without hindrance, and the angels are not partly disobedient but in all things yield and obey."³ We ought to pray that men will do all things as God wills and not only in part. Because God is our Father, we ought to pray that His will be done, not merely in ourselves, but everywhere on the earth. We should pray that "error be destroyed, truth implanted, wickedness cast out, and virtue return."⁴ If this be accomplished, "there will be no

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:7 (NPNF 10:134).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:7 (LFC 11:294).

³Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:7 (NPNF 10:135).

⁴Ibid.

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difference between things below and above, separated as they are in nature, the earth exhibiting to us another set of angels."¹

Although as men we are to endeavor to live as angels, yet we are not incorporeal beings. While on earth we need food, and so Christ, St. Chrysostom recalls, tells us to ask for bread (Matthew 6:11). However, in keeping with our Lord's command, we should request only what is needed for the day at hand. We should not ask for anything superfluous nor for the next day's needs. We may never see that day. Christ wants us to be "unencumbered and winged for flight"; in prayer, we should seek only what nature requires for one day.²

Christ, Chrysostom, states further, even commands us to approach the Father and to ask for forgiveness of our sins. This privilege is a manifestation of God's mercy to believers, for it signifies that even after the font it is possible to have sin remitted. However, the saint reminds us that we must take the first step. Christ tells us to pardon others first, and in return our Father will pardon us.³ Such

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:7 (NPNF 10:135). Emile Mersch says: "Notre élévation à l'état surnaturel est représentée plus souvent par saint Jean Chrysostome comme une vie angélique." Emile Mersch, Le Corps mystique du Christ (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1936, I, 468, note 1).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:8 (LFC 11:296).

³Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:9 (LFC 11:296).

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loving-kindness on the part of God makes Chrysostom exclaim:

Thou forgivest in thy need, but God, having need of none: thou, thy fellow slave; God, His slave: thou,¹ liable to unnumbered charges; God, being without sin.

So important is fraternal charity, Chrysostom informs us, that Christ not only included forgiveness of injuries in the first three petitions of the Our Father, but also that He set it down in particular. Even after the prayer He makes mention of no other commandments than this: "For if you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses" (Matthew 6:14).² Thus, in this petition of the Our Father, we have control over the judgment that is to be passed on ourselves.³

Finally, Chrysostom reminds his hearers that life is a conflict with the devil on one side and God on the other. We should not pray to escape the battle, for this is impossible. But neither should we rush into the conflict. When temptations come we should face them nobly, remembering that we are under a powerful King. Like ourselves, the devil is one of God's creatures and he can tempt us only in so far as God gives him a license to do it. Hence, we ought to ask our

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:9 (LFC 11:297).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Father for spiritual strength against future temptations.¹

In summary, then, sons of God ought to solicit first the glorification of their Father's name, the coming of His kingdom, and the perfect accomplishment of His will on earth. Then they should request spiritual favours for themselves and for others "lifting up pure hands without wrath and contention" (1 Timothy 2:8).

These are also the favours that St. Chrysostom urged the catechumens to ask for when they came out of the baptismal waters.² He had great confidence that their prayers would be answered because now they were God's adopted children; they were in the front ranks of His friends.³ Besides they "who formerly were captives and slaves with no right to speak out,"⁴ now had the privilege of speaking to their Father, in common, for others, and with love.⁵ Thus, they could expect their petitions to be answered when they said "Our Father".⁶

¹ Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:10 (LFC 11:298-299).

² John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 2:29-30 (ACW 31:54). Cf. Ibid., 11:30-31 (ACW 31:171).

³ Ibid., 2:29 (ACW 31:54).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Chrysostom, On Matthew 19:6 (LFC 11:293).

⁶ John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 2:29 (ACW 31:54). Tertullian has this same thought in the closing sentence of his instruction On Baptism. He says: "Therefore, blessed ones, whom the grace of God awaits, when you ascend

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Acting in a Filial Manner

In his commentary on Romans, St. Chrysostom begins with the words of Christ, "You are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Then, he gives specific advice on how to imitate the Father: "Be free from all passions and show gentleness to them who affront and wrong you. For the Father is so to them who blaspheme Him."¹ Going a step further, he points out that it was only when Christ said, "Do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who persecute and calumniate you" (Matthew 5:44-45), that He brought in a reward: "That you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:45). Next, he informs us that nothing brings us so near to God and makes us so like Him as this kind of well-doing. Finally, he reminds us that St. Paul had this same idea in mind when he told the Ephesians to

from that most sacred font of your new birth, and spread your hands for the first time in the house of your Mother, together with your brethren, ask from the Father, ask from the Lord, that His own specialities of grace and distribution of gifts may be supplied you. 'Ask,' saith He, 'and you shall receive.' Well, you have asked, and have received; you have knocked and it has been opened to you. Only, I pray that when you are asking, you be mindful likewise of Tertullian, the sinner." Tertullian, On Baptism (ANF 3:679). Joseph Plumpe, using F. J. Dölger as an authority, says that Tertullian is actually referring to the first praying of the Lord's Prayer by the newly baptized, immediately after their coming up from the font. J. Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1943), p. 52.

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 19:34-35 (LFC 7:357).

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be "imitators of God, as very dear children" (Ephesians 5:1).¹

In his commentary on Ephesians, Chrysostom advises us to manifest love by forgiving others: "Forgive another and thou art made like unto God."² He recalls that when the Father forgave us we were made His children. Hence, because we are His children we should love in the same way as He loves. To love in the same degree, however, is impossible. St. Chrysostom climaxes it all in a ringing statement: "Be a lover of love; . . . by this hast thou been made a son."³

On the basis of a common Father, St. Chrysostom admonishes the Christian who speaks abusive or reproachful language to another believer. Commenting on the Apostle's words, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30), Chrysostom recalls the first words that the neophyte uttered on being spiritually reborn, "Our Father".⁴ Then he adds: "He who calls God "Our Father" must not revile God's other children."⁵ He reminds us that "reviling another" is a deed unworthy of the "high birth" which God has bestowed on us out

¹ Chrysostom, On Romans 19:34-35 (LFC 7:357).

² Chrysostom, On Ephesians 17:1 (NPNF 13:129).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Chrysostom, On Ephesians 14:30 (LFC 6:260). Cf. supra p. 34, note 1.

⁵ Ibid.

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of loving-kindness. Besides, treating a brother ignominiously is not what the Son of God, our brother, would do.

The work of the Son of God was to forgive enemies, to pray for them that crucified Him, to shed His blood for them that hated Him. . . . These are works worthy of the Son of God--to make His enemies . . . brethren and heirs--not to treat them that are become brethren, with ignominy like slaves.¹

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who has marked us as a "royal flock" is grieved by such words. Chrysostom asks: "How is it possible to call the person we rail at a brother? If he is not a brother, how can we say, 'Our Father'?"²

After showing that the very words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, who art in heaven," transport the speaker to heaven where his Father is, the preacher puts forth a series of questions:

Thou art standing beside the royal throne, and thou revilest? . . . Hast thou thy citizenship in heaven with angels, and dost thou revile? Art thou counted worthy of the Lord's kiss, and dost thou revile?³

Thus, for Chrysostom, children of God have no right to abuse other members of the family with their tongues.

¹ Chrysostom, On Ephesians 14:30 (LFC 6:260).

² Ibid.

³ Chrysostom, On Ephesians 14:30 (LFC 6:261).

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Elsewhere, St. Chrysostom remarks that Christians once adopted should maintain peace.¹ He sees no excuse for division among Christians who have the same Father and who partake of the same spiritual drink, provided by the Father, the Eucharistic cup. "Our Father, desiring to lead us to a kindly affection, hath devised this also, that we should drink out of one cup; a thing which belongs to intense love." He immediately concludes:

We have partaken of a spiritual table, let us be partakers also of spiritual love. For if robbers, on partaking of salt, forget their character; what excuse shall we have, who are continually partaking of the Lord's body, and do not imitate even their gentleness? And yet, to many, not one table only, but even to be of one city, hath sufficed for friendship; but we, when we have the same city, and the same house, and table, and way, and door, and root, and life, and head, and the same shepherd, and king, and teacher, and judge, and maker, and father, and to whom all things are common; what indulgence can we deserve, if we be divided one from another?²

Again, St. Chrysostom reminds us that a filial love should motivate all our acts: "Not as hired servants, but as sons and freemen, let us do all things for love of our Father."³

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 1:7 (NPNF 11:342).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 32:10 (NPNF 10:218).

³Chrysostom, On 1 Corinthians 7:12 (NPNF 12:39).

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Among the virtues that make us filial, Chrysostom mentions mercy to the poor by giving alms.¹ He makes this clear in his description of a merciful man who, in the words of Christ, is like the Father.

The merciful man is a priest wrapped in the robe of loving-kindness, a holier than the sacred vestment, and is anointed with oil, not composed of material elements, but manufactured by the Spirit, and he beareth a crown of mercies, for it is said: "Who crowneth thee with pity and with mercies"; and instead of wearing a plate bearing the name of God, is himself like to God. For how? "Ye," saith Christ, "shall be like unto your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:45).²

Thus, we have the words of Christ Himself to verify Chrysostom's thought.

If the giver of alms resembles God the Father, Chrysostom regards the recipient of the same as Christ, our brother. He urges the wealthy to give at least part of their wealth to the poor because the one in need is Christ, their brother.

Art thou unwilling to yield Him up all? Give Him but the half, but the third part. He is thy brother, and joint heir; make Him joint heir with thee here, too. Hearest thou not what saith the prophet? "Those who pertain to thy seed thou shalt not overlook" (Isaia 48:7, lxx). But, if we must not overlook our kinsman, much less our Lord, having towards thee, together with His authority as Lord, the claim also of kindred.³

¹ Chrysostom, On 2 Titus 6:2 (LFC 12:327).

² Chrysostom, On 2 Corinthians 20:3 (LFC 27:235).

³ Chrysostom, On 2 Corinthians 20:3 (LFC 27:236-237).

Gentleness of speech, forgiveness of others, preservation of peace, acts of mercy, the giving of alms, and the sharing of wealth, these are only a few of the virtues that sons of the Father should display.

Receiving the Father's Forgiveness

St. Chrysostom comments on St. Paul's "death and resurrection" theology of baptism (Romans 6:2-11). He reminds his people that when they were baptized they became dead to sin and rose to a new life (Romans 6:2-4).¹ He also insists that having died to sin, they should sin no more. However, the saint realizes that shortly after baptism, many "sons of God" return to their former sins, "to Egypt."² He returns to this matter in his commentary on Second Corinthians, bemoaning the fact that so many who enjoy a noble birth soon lose the grace they acquired.

We who enjoy a birth so noble do not so much as we know what is said, because we quickly lose the reality and are dazzled about the objects of sense. For this glory, the unspeakable and awful, remaineth in us for a day or two, and then we quench it, bringing over it the winter of worldly concerns, and with the thickness of those clouds repelling its rays.³

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 10:2-4 (NPNF 11:405-406).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 10:3-4 (NPNF 11:406).

³Chrysostom, On 2 Corinthians 7:5 (NPNF 12:314).

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Such a soul is no longer a "true son"; he is "unworthy of his Father and a deserter to the usurped sovereignty of another."

Elsewhere, Chrysostom points out that in the natural order an ungrateful son loses his rank and is divested of his nobility. In as much as he outrages his father, he is no longer a son: "He loses his nobility of birth; he tramples under foot nature itself."² Chrysostom asks: "If such be the simple truth, how can the one who outrages our Father, par excellence, still be His child?"³ He assures us, however, that our place of honour can be regained if it has been lost. The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-31) exemplifies this.

The prodigal was the younger of two sons. He left the paternal home, wasted his share of the inheritance, and was reduced to the greatest wretchedness: "He was in a feebleness state than any imbecile or disordered person."⁴ When he recognized his plight and recalled the blessings of his father's home, he resolved to return and did so.

In a letter to his friend Theodore, who had relapsed temporarily into a life of sin, Chrysostom describes the prodigal son.

¹Chrysostom, On Titus 1:3 (NPNF 13:521).

²Chrysostome, Aux Ephésiens 22:2 (BAR 18:415).

³Ibid.

⁴Chrysostom, On Romans 10:3-4 (LFC 7:160).

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He was no stranger, but a son, and a brother of the child who had been well pleasing to the father, and he plunged into no ordinary vice, but went to the very extremity, so to say, of evil; he the rich and free and well-bred son being reduced to a more miserable condition than that of slaves, strangers, and hirelings. Nevertheless, he returned again to his original condition, and had his former honor restored to him.¹

Like the wayward son in the parable, the son of God, who has fallen deeply into sin, has left his Father's house and has gone to the foreign land of sin.² If he is willing, he can give up vice, practise virtue, and return to his Father's house. St. Chrysostom entreats the sinner to return:

Let us go up to our Father's house, and not stay lingering over the length of the journey. For if we be willing, the way back again is easy and very speedy. Only let us leave the strange and foreign land, for that is what sin is, drawing us far away from our Father's house; let us leave her then, that we may return to the house of our Father.³

Regardless of the depth of degradation, Chrysostom urges the sinner to return and to receive the Father's forgiveness.

Though thou hast devoured thy Father's substance, and have been a long time out of sight, though without honor, though last of all, though thou approach Him

¹Chrysostom, To the Fallen Theodore 1:7 (NPNF 9:96).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 10:3-4 (LFC 7:160).

³Ibid.

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angry, though much displeased; be willing only to pray and to return, and thou shalt receive all.¹

Likewise, in his commentary on Philippians, St. Chrysostom pleads with the sinner.

We have so loving a Father, who so eagerly desires our return, that if we only leave our sins, if we will only return to Him, He will no longer bear to call in question our former deeds, only let us quit them. It is sufficient apology with Him, that we have returned.²

When the prodigal son returned home, he enjoyed many good things. His father showered more benefits on him than on his faithful brother, because "he had greater pleasure himself at receiving back his son."³ He could have reprimanded the youth for his ill-timed extravagance and flight. He could have reproached him and recalled his misdemeanors, but he did not. Instead, he embraced him, kissed him, put a robe on him, and had a great feast. Briefly, he bestowed abundant honours on him.⁴

Like the father of the prodigal, our Father loves the repentant son as much as, or even more than, the son who has

¹Chrysostom, On Matthew 22:7 (LFC 11:340).

²Chrysostom, On Philippians 11:4 (LFC 14:137).

³Chrysostom, On Romans 10:3-4 (LFC 7:161).

⁴Ibid.

remained true.¹ It gives Him greater pleasure to be called Father rather than Master; He prefers to have sons rather than slaves. He even gave up His own Son (Romans 8:32), so that we might be His adopted sons, so that we might love Him, not as a master only, but as a father.²

Receiving the Father's Chastisement

Forgiveness is a sign of God's love; correction and punishment are marks of His affection: "For whom the Lord loves, He chastises; and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6, quoting Proverbs 3:11). Chrysostom's commentary on Hebrews amplifies this thought.

In any family, the father corrects his son. He may do so for personal reasons, hoping that the child may be useful to him, or for no reason at all. Or he may correct lest his child becomes indolent. There may also be times when his command or advice is impersonal.³

Our heavenly Father, too, chastizes His sons to prevent them from being indolent: "For the same reason, 'God dealeth with you as sons' (Hebrews 12:7)."⁴ God, however, never chastises from any selfish motive. He does it because

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 10:3-4 (LFC 7:160).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 10:3-4 (LFC 7:161).

³Chrysostom, On Hebrews 29:3 (NPNF 14:500).

⁴Ibid.

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He desires to give us a share in His benefits, not because He Himself wants to receive something.

He chastens, He does everything, He uses all diligence, that we may become capable of receiving His benefits: "For they (earthly fathers) indeed corrected us for a few days, as they saw fit; but He for our benefit,¹ that we may share His honiness" (Hebrews 12:10).¹

This is what St. Chrysostom calls "genuine love" and "love in reality."²

Elsewhere, Chrysostom informs us that God the Father corrects and punishes as a deterrent from future evil. But He does it gently and moderately. This is seen in Chrysostom's account of God's treatment of Adam after the Fall.

Like a loving father who is moved by his natural affection for an unruly child, God first rebuked Adam gently: "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten then of the tree which I commanded you not to eat" (Genesis 3:11). Chrysostom remarks that such words come from a friend rather than a Master, from a friend despised, and not even forsaking.³ This gentle reprimand, however, does not liquidate punishment. God does not forgive Adam entirely. He punishes him with moderation by expelling him from Paradise and

¹Chrysostom, On Hebrews 29:3 (NPNF 14:500).

²Ibid.

³Chrysostom, On Romans 23:10 (NPNF 11:515).

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condemning him to a life of toil and labour. He does this so "that the child, like a ship, may not thereafter run aground on a reef of greater evil."¹ Chrysostom reiterates that in this way "God curbed man's spirit for the future, so that he might not leap any farther away."² Moreover, God did not settle Adam at too great a distance from Paradise. He stationed him nearby in view of the closed entrance. Thus, Adam suffered because he could see the joys that he had to forfeit on account of his disobedience. This constant admonition was a reminder for man to be more careful of God's commandments in the future.³ Thus did God treat Adam when he sinned.

In conclusion, St. Chrysostom says that every righteous man must pass through affliction, because Christ has said that the "way to life" is "strait and narrow" (Matthew 7:13-14).⁴ In keeping with St. Paul, Chrysostom recalls that the Father set forth His own Son as an example for the other sons. Through suffering He led His first-born (Romans 8:29) to glory; it is the way that He brings other sons to glory also.⁵ Chrysostom says that on condition that we suffer with

¹John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 2:4 (ACW 31:44).

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 2:6 (ACW 31:45).

⁴Chrysostom, On Hebrews 29:2 (NPNF 14:499).

⁵Chrysostom, On Hebrews 4:4 (NPNF 14:384).

Christ in this present life, we shall be joint heirs with Him in the next life.¹

Chastisements, then, are a token of the Father's love. For us, His children, they are intended to be a deterrent from evil, a means to holiness, and a way to glory.

Receiving the Reward of Inheritance

Since it is possible to be a child of the family and yet not receive a portion of the paternal inheritance, Chrysostom insists with St. Paul, that we are both children and heirs: "We have received the adoption and we are waiting for heaven."² There is, then, another life besides this present one. St. Chrysostom implies this in his commentary on St. Paul's words: "But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ, provided, however, we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17). He comments that St. Paul is reminding the Christians of Rome about the graces they have already received from God, and about those they can hope to receive from Him as a reward for filial fidelity.³

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 14:17 (LFC 7:242).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 13:15 (LFC 7:239).

³Chrysostom, On Romans 14:17 (NPNF 11:443).

A similar thought occurs in Chrysostom's commentary on Ephesians where he interprets the Apostle's use of the word "earnest" (Ephesians 1:14, lxx). St. Paul, he says, calls the blessings which Christians receive "an earnest" because they are a part of what has been promised to us by God. Chrysostom tells us that we do not receive everything at once because we have not done all that is required. We believe, but that is only a beginning. It is not until we have manifested our faith by works that God will give us everything.¹

Elsewhere in this thesis we have considered the portion of the inheritance that God has already given to us. He justifies and regenerates us in the waters of baptism; He glorifies us by grace.² He has given us His Son.³ It is this latter gift that inspires St. Chrysostom to say that we have been given the greater portion of the promised kingdom now; for, we have been given the Lord of the kingdom and with Him a share in all that is His.⁴ In heaven, it is near this only-begotten Son that the adopted sons are going to be placed.⁵ St. Chrysostom marvels at the greatness of this

¹Chrysostome, Aux Ephésiens 2:2 (BAR 18:184).

²Cf. supra, p. 39, note 2.

³Cf. supra, p. 16.

⁴Chrysostom, On Eutropius 2:15-16 (NPNF 9:263-264).

⁵Chrysostom, On Romans 14:18 (LFC 7:243).

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gift: "If to be a child was a grace unspeakable, just think how great a thing it is to be heir! But if this be great, much more is it to be joint heir!"¹ We have also been given the Holy Spirit.² And the Spirit is the earnest of redemption, of the possession of heaven: "They to whom the Holy Spirit has been really given know that He is the earnest of the heritage."³

In his commentary on Colossians (1:12-13), St. Chrysostom likewise contemplates our spiritual inheritance. First, he tells us that the Father frees us from error and brings us to a knowledge of the Truth.⁴ Secondly, he says that the Father counts us worthy to be in the same kingdom as His beloved Son.

The Father has counted us worthy of the same things with the Son; and not only Son, but what gives it greater force, His beloved Son. Those who were enemies, those who were in darkness, as it were on a sudden He hath transferred to where the Son is, to the same honor with Him.⁵

Furthermore, this is the very same inheritance and portion of the inheritance which the saints enjoy. They are in heaven;

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 14:17 (NPNF 11:443).

²Cf. supra, p. 31, note 1.

³Chrysostome, Aux Ephésiens 2:2 (BAR 18:184).

⁴Chrysostom, On Colossians 2:3 (LFC 14:202-203).

⁵Chrysostom, On Colossians 2:3 (LFC 14:203).

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they know God. The Father lets us enjoy these very same things, now.¹ Hence, St. Chrysostom wonders what excuse a son of God can offer for committing sin.

We, who have received heaven and are become joint heirs with the Only-begotten, what excuse shall we have, for running to the serpent after the dove?²

Reflecting on what we have been delivered from and on what we have obtained, Chrysostom comments that we have received a twofold honour from the Father.

Were some lowly person to have become king, he hath it in his power to give a presidency to whom he will; and this is the extent of his power, to give the dignity; he cannot also make the person fit for the office, and oftentimes the honor makes one so preferred even ridiculous. If, however, he have both conferred on one the dignity, and also made him fit for the honor, and equal to the administration, then indeed the thing is an honor. . . . He (God the Father) hath not only given us the honor, but hath also made us strong enough to receive it. . . . The honor is twofold, the giving, and the making fit for the gift.³

Hence, to share the inheritance with Christ is a great gift, but to be made fit for it is something greater still.

All these blessings--justification, glorification, sonship, the gift of Christ and of the Spirit--show that sons of God have a part of their inheritance now. Since the

¹Chrysostom, On Colossians 2:3 (LFC 14:202).

²Chrysostom, On Matthew 12:4 (NPNF 10:78).

³Chrysostom, On Colossians 2:3 (LFC 14:201).

remainder is "laid up for us in heaven" (Colossians 1:5),¹ St. Chrysostom advises us to keep our eyes on the goal, to press on to the prize (Philippians 3:14),² to "trample under foot our sins,"³ otherwise, how shall "the Father give us the heritage"?⁴ He continues to say: "If we have not triumphed over an enemy already vanquished, what hope shall we have for entering the Father's house?"⁵

Before we are fully adopted, however, there must also be a bodily resurrection. Chrysostom sees this as the last step in a transformation which the Holy Spirit has been working in sons of God since their baptism.⁶ Chrysostom remarks that St. Paul, who insisted that we are sons of God (Romans 8:15), nevertheless placed adoption among things to be hoped for: "We . . . who have the first-fruits of the Spirit--we still groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).⁷ Chrysostom explains why St. Paul speaks thus. While we inhabit this

¹Chrysostom, On Colossians 2:2 (LFC 14:201).

²Chrysostom, On Philippians 12:14 (NPNF 13:239).

³Chrysostome Aux Ephésiens 23:5 (BAR 18:424).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Chrysostom, On Romans 13:11 (NPNF 11:437). Doctrinally and ascetically this is an extremely important point.

⁷Chrysostom, On Romans 14:23 (LFC 7:248).

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earth, our inheritance is uncertain because our grace of sonship is in danger of being lost. It becomes secure only at death, provided we die trusting in God's promises: "If we decease with a good hope, then is the gift immovable, and clearer, and greater, having no longer any change to fear from death and sin." But it is only after the glorious resurrection of our body that our adoption is complete. Then it will never be possible to lose it.

Then, therefore, will the grace be secure, when our body shall be freed from death and its countless passions. For this is full redemption, not a redemption only, but such that¹ we shall never again return to our former captivity.

Not only is adoption incomplete without the redemption of the body, but it is also incomplete without the change of the whole material universe.² Even natural creation is "in the midst of its pangs" waiting for and expecting the good things that the sons of God are waiting for.

As a nurse who is bringing up a king's child, when he has come to his father's power, does herself enjoy the the good things along with him, thus also is the creation.³

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 14:23 (LFC 7:248). Elsewhere Chrysostom says this adoption is not destroyed by death but follows us to eternity. On Romans 1:7 (NPNF 11:342).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 14:19-20 (NPNF 11:444).

³Chrysostom, On Romans 14:21 (NPNF 11:445).

Chrysostom continues to explain that the whole material creation will share in the blessings which have been prepared for the faithful children of God because of the children.

Thus fathers also when a son is to appear at his coming to a dignity, clothe even the servants with a brighter garment, to the glory of the son; so will God also clothe the creature with incorruption for the glorious liberty of the children.

Who are these children? St. Chrysostom gives us the answer: "Not as many as have received the Spirit, but as many as are led by the Spirit; that is, as many as live up to this all their life long; they are sons of God."² For serving God faithfully until death, they shall inherit the kingdom which has been prepared from the foundation of the world and which awaits their works.³ Christ will say to them: "Come, blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).⁴

We have seen in this chapter that to retain the dignity of sonship bestowed in baptism, Christians must make an effort to live virtuously, following the directions of the

¹Chrysostom, On Romans 14:21 (NPNF 11:445).

²Chrysostom, On Romans 14:14 (NPNF 11:441).

³Chrysostom, On Romans 14:18 (NPNF 11:443).

⁴Chrysostome, Aux Ephésiens 1:1 (BAR 18:173).

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Spirit. They should manifest an attitude of filial trust in God the Father, carry on a childlike conversation with Him in prayer, and reflect His love and gentleness in their dealings with His other children. These latter should always be treated as Christ our brother. For persevering faithfully in the Spirit of adoption, Christ, at the end of the world, will bring us to the heavenly kingdom with Himself, as His co-heirs. Our adoption will be complete in the bodily resurrection--the transformation the Spirit has been effecting in the sons of God ever since their baptism. The material universe, too, will share in the glory of the sons of God, for their sake.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters, data was offered to show that St. John Chrysostom saw the Christian's adoptive sonship as a great reality. Planned by the Father from all eternity, executed in time through His incarnate Son, effected in the Holy Spirit, sonship is now given in the Church. It comes from the Father through the glorified Christ in the Father's gift of the Spirit to all who accept Christ and are baptized "with water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). Incorporated into Christ's Body, the baptized are sons of the Father, brothers of Christ, and children of holy Mother Church. Sharing Christ's Spirit, they form one spiritual family.

For Chrysostom, however, to be a son does not suffice. One must live as a son. God's children ought to manifest a filial trust in their Father's loving care of them, converse with Him in prayer, seek His merciful forgiveness when required, treat His other children with love, and in their way of life bring glory to their Father. Under the impulse of the Spirit of sonship, they should practise virtues that are pleasing to the Father and endeavour to retain the image of sonship received in baptism intact. Nay, they must perfect that image. Living as children of the Father and as brothers of Christ, they prepare themselves for the glorious resurrection to come, and for a fulfilled sonship with Christ in the house of the Father. In the Spirit through Christ,

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children of God return to the Father.

Evaluation

A personalist representation of our relationship with God is undergoing a renewed emphasis in modern times. We are made cognizant of it in various decrees of the Second Vatican Council. In the first chapter of The Constitution on the Church, for instance, we hear that God the Father planned from all eternity to raise men to a conformity, a likeness, with His Eternal Son.

All the elect, before time began, the Father "foreknew and predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ.¹

After the fall of Adam, God's plan became a saving plan, and here the Son is named:

God the Father did not leave men, fallen in Adam to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer. . . . The Son came, sent by the Father. . . . To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption.²

¹Vatican Council II, 3rd session, The Constitution on the Church, chap. 1, n. 2 (Glen Rock, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1965), pp. 63-64.

²Ibid., chap. 1, n. 2-3, pp. 63-65.

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When Christ had accomplished the work which the Father had given Him to do on earth and had returned to heaven then He sent the Spirit to "continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father."¹ A commentator, writing on this section of the Constitution, points out the father-son relationship involved:

We learn that it is through the Son, in the Spirit, that we are united to God the Father now. The Church appears here as making present to us the mediation of Jesus and the gifts of the Spirit so that we may live perfectly as children of the Father, as his sons, as a family of God.²

Elsewhere in the Constitution we read: "By communicating His Spirit, Christ's brothers, called together from all nations, were mystically constituted His Body."³ The risen Christ is the head of the "new and universal people of the sons of God."⁴

It is now in the Church that the Father comes to us through Christ bestowing the Spirit and that we go in the Spirit through Christ to the Father, offering Him perfect

¹Vatican Council II, 3rd session, The Constitution on the Church, chap. 1, n. 4 (Glen Rock, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1965), p. 65.

²Ibid., Gregory Baum, Commentary, chap. 1, p. 20.

³Ibid., chap. 1, n. 7, p. 70.

⁴Ibid., chap. 2, n. 13, p. 86.

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worship. This is taught in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

By baptism men are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with Him, are buried with Him, and rise with Him; they receive the Spirit of adoption as sons "in which we cry: Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15),¹ and thus become true adorers whom the Father seeks.

This same Constitution, in speaking of the importance of Sunday, says that the faithful should gather together to thank God the Father who "has begotten them again, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead unto a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3).²

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, speaking of the liturgy as a summit, again uses the expression "sons of God."

The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of the apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice and to eat the Lord's supper.³

¹Vatican Council II, 2nd session, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," chap. 1, n. 6, The Church's Worship, p. 10.

²Ibid., chap. 5, n. 106, p. 195.

³Ibid., chap. 1, n. 10, p. 12.

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Finally, The Constitution on the Church reminds us that in the Church we become God's children, that we must strive with Christ to do the will of the Father, that we must be constantly vigilant so that, having finished the course of our earthly life, we may merit to be numbered among the blessed.¹

In conclusion, it can be said that St. John Chrysostom's teaching on our divine adoption reflects truly and correctly the Church's magisterium. It is not something dead. It is very much alive in modern theological, liturgical, and pastoral revivals. Christianity today is explicit in speaking of God not only as our Creator but as our Father, in referring to Christ not only as our Saviour but also as our Brother, in designating our fellow-Christians not merely as our neighbor but as our brother. The vocabulary of Vatican II has set the seal of approval to that presentation of religion. The thinking is scriptural, as is clear from the frequent biblical quotations the Council uses. But the thinking is also patristic. The present essay has attempted to show that the preaching of St. John Chrysostom on divine adoption is close in spirit and language to present day pastoral preoccupations, particularly as manifested in Vatican Council II.

¹Vatican Council II, 3rd session, The Constitution on the Church, chap. 7, n. 48, pp. 166-167.

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ABSTRACT

Adoption generally means the acceptance of a stranger as one's son and heir. Both God adopts and man adopts. Human adoption, however, is a legal fiction, whereas divine adoption is a rebirth, a reality which takes place at baptism. Man, incorporated into Christ, participates in His divine nature, receives the Spirit of adoption, and is empowered to cry out to God, "Father."

St. John Chrysostom tells us that this favour is purely a work of divine love. It takes place simply because God is good. Adam, created in grace, was treated by God as a father treats a son. This filial relationship between God and man was severed when Adam sinned. It could only be restored by God's creative power. This grace, however, was deferred until God sent His only-begotten Son into the world. His death won for men the grace that makes them pleasing to the Father, so that He accepts them as sons and sends them His Spirit.

For St. Chrysostom the undivided Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, is active in bringing about adoption. The invocation to the Blessed Trinity employed in the baptismal formula and the three-fold act of immersion symbolize this. Chrysostom, however, does not hesitate to appropriate a special phase of the work to each Person. From all eternity the Father planned and willed the divine

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adoption of man. The Son, through the Incarnation and Redemption, restored the human race to divine favour. Christ made men fit for the Father's love and bequeathed to them His own Spirit. This Spirit the Father confers in baptism. In the Spirit, Christians are given a noble birth; they are born sons of God. In Him, they know that they are sons and are moved to call upon God as "Our Father."

Although Adoption is a work of love from the Father through Christ in the Spirit, man must do his share. Sonship is the Father's gift to those who accept Christ not only in mind but also in deed. It presupposes a profession of faith in Christ and in the Trinity. The baptismal liturgy of Antioch required the catechumen to make a profession of faith in Christ together with a special promise to serve Him.

The baptized are in reality children of God; yet, they are never His natural sons. Christ alone is the co-eternal, consubstantial, only-begotten Son, who in time, assumed human nature in order to make them gods and sons. Their filial relationship is always a grace from God the Father. It is also a grace through Christ who, wanting to become their brother, assumed their flesh and blood. Extending His love even further, Christ gave back to them as nourishment the very flesh and blood by which He became their brother. Thus, the very life which He has from the Father flows into them. They participate in the life of the Son of God now,

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and hope to do so for eternity.

It is now in the Church that men are born sons of God. She is the spiritual Mother of the baptized who, as sons of the Father, brothers of Christ, and sharers of the same Spirit, form one family of God. So close is this spiritual bond that there can be no reason for any dissension among its members.

St. Chrysostom sees adoption as a dignity which the baptized must endeavour to retain by living as perfect sons of the Father. They ought to display filial trust in the Father's provident care of them and in His loving forgiveness of sin. Conversing with Him in prayer, they ought to petition primarily for spiritual favours that will redound to the glory of their Father. Their filial love should manifest itself in their treatment of the Father's other children who are identified with Christ, His Son and their brother. Sons of God can hope to be joint-heirs with Christ in the kingdom of the Father. The glorious resurrection will be the human body's participation in the adoption of sons. The entire material universe will participate in the blessings bestowed on true sons, to the glory of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.