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THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ADOPTION  
IN THE SERMONS OF SAINT PETER CHRYSOLOGUS

by Sister Mary Joan (Boyer, Irene)

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*E. Shornice*  
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## INTRODUCTION

Our age which has seen the rise of world-wide militant atheism, a unique phenomenon in history, as Pope Pius XI pointed out,<sup>1</sup> has also witnessed a great spiritual revival. This revival is due, in great part, to a reawakened interest in dogmatic theology. An observer of the theological scene remarks: "This swing in theology is not uncaused. It has its ground-breakers and forerunners. To them belongs as one of the most influential, Matthias Joseph Scheeben."<sup>2</sup>

The background to this resurgence of favour for the nineteenth-century German theologian has been fully described by Father Cyril Vollert.<sup>3</sup> Scheeben's thought has been analyzed and evaluated in America by such contemporary theologians as John Courtney Murray<sup>4</sup> and Cyril Vollert. An American non-Catholic theologian, E. H. Palmer, has published a full-length study of Scheeben's doctrine of divine adoption.<sup>5</sup> Scheeben

<sup>1</sup>Pius XI, Divini Redemptoris, March 19, 1937, Vatican Press Translation, N.C.W.C., Washington, D.C. "It exceeds in amplitude and violence anything yet experienced in the preceding persecutions launched against the Church."

<sup>2</sup>C. Vollert, S.J., "Matthias Scheeben and the Revival of Theology," Theological Studies, 6 (1945), p. 487.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 453-488.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. J. C. Murray, "The Root of Faith: The Doctrine of M. J. Scheeben," Theological Studies, 9 (1948), pp. 20-46.

<sup>5</sup>E. H. Palmer, Scheeben's Doctrine of Divine Adoption. Doctoral dissertation (University of Amsterdam, Kampen, Holland, 1953), pp. xi - 202. This dissertation is reviewed in Nouvelle Revue Théologique 88 (1956), p. 981, by J. Galot, S.J., who says that Palmer gives "un exposé fidèle et détaillé de la doctrine de Scheeben sur l'adoption."

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has been one of the favourite theologians of the liturgical revival.<sup>6</sup> No phase of Scheeben's thought can be lightly dismissed. His central themes deserve special attention. The doctrine of supernatural adoption that comes with grace is one of these.

The heart of Scheeben's doctrine, according to Cyril Vollert, is divine adoption. In the foreword to his translation of Scheeben's Nature and Grace, Vollert says: "He never wearied of pointing out that Christian life is a participation in the divine life."<sup>7</sup> M. J. Donnelly, S.J.,<sup>8</sup> and John Courtney Murray, S.J.,<sup>9</sup> both tell us that the central idea of Scheeben's whole theology is the divinization of the soul by grace. The Reformed theologian, E. H. Palmer, is in agreement. Speaking of the doctrines of sanctifying grace, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and adoption, Palmer adds: "It is exactly these three subjects in which Scheeben excelled and to which he contributed so much by his deep penetration, new insights, and ever-working speculativeness."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Cf. "Matthias-Joseph Scheeben: un rénovateur de la théologie catholique." Les questions liturgiques et paroissiales (Abbaye du Mont César, Louvain), 23 (1938) pp. 181-188.

<sup>7</sup>M. J. Scheeben, Nature and Grace, trans. by C. Vollert (St. Louis: Herder, 1954), p. xiv.

<sup>8</sup>M. J. Donnelly, "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit according to M. J. Scheeben," Theological Studies, 7 (1946), pp. 244-280.

<sup>9</sup>Murray, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Palmer, op. cit., Introduction, p. xi.

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According to these writers, then, it seems that it is the doctrine of divine adoption that gives to Scheeben's thought much of its unity and power. In the light of this doctrine, Scheeben explains the coherence of all the mysteries.

Scheeben shows that the stressing of this doctrine of supernatural adoption has a historical background. "Stress was laid on the supernatural character of the vocation of rational creatures, in the controversies with the Nestorians."<sup>11</sup> In the same passage he refers to St. Cyril of Alexandria as "constantly extolling the sublimity of adoptive sonship and of the privileges connected therewith,"<sup>12</sup> and passes on to St. Peter Chrysologus as representative of the Latin Fathers:

The doctrine of St. Cyril is also found in the Latin Fathers, chiefly in St. Peter Chrysologus, who points out that the adoptive sonship is almost as marvellous as the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ (Sermons 68 and 72).<sup>13</sup>

Matthias Scheeben, in speaking of divine adoption, frequently refers to, or quotes, St. Peter Chrysologus. In his book, Nature and Grace, he quotes two of Peter's sermons, numbers 67 and 71, and comments on them in relation to divine adoption. In his Mysteries of Christianity, Scheeben quotes Peter on adoption, and in his Glories of Divine Grace, he

<sup>11</sup>J. Wilhelm and T. B. Scannell, A Manual of Catholic Theology, based on Scheeben's "Dogmatik." (London; 1909), Vol. I, p. 453.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>13</sup>Quoted at length by Scheeben in La dogmatique, trans. by P. Bélet, (Paris; 1881), Vol. 3, pp. 488-490.

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quotes him seven times.

This would suggest that Peter Chrysologus has something special to offer in explaining the doctrine of divine adoption. With this in mind, might not an examination of a representative selection of writings prove rewarding? The present dissertation undertakes this limited inquiry. An exhaustive research of all Peter's sermons will not be attempted; use will be made of some typical sermons. The texts referred to or quoted by Scheeben, will be given first consideration. The choice of the sermons made by George E. Ganss, S.J., in his translation of Selected Sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus in Volume 17 of The Fathers of the Church will serve as a guide; this volume contains sermons most characteristic of St. Peter's teaching.

The authenticity of the sermons used has been checked by recourse to Dekkers' Clavis Patrum latinorum<sup>14</sup> and Glorieux's Pour révaloriser Migne.<sup>15</sup>

But before beginning this study, it will be of help in understanding the sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus to review the background against which he lived and taught.

<sup>14</sup>Clavis Patrum latinorum. Compiled by E. Dekkers. Sacris Erudiri 3 (1951). Steenbrugge: In Abbatia Sancti Petri. Pp. xxiii - 461.

<sup>15</sup>T. Glorieux, "Pour révaloriser Migne: Tables rectificatives." Mélanges de science religieuse 9 (1952), cahier supplémentaire. Pp. 82. Not authentic or doubtful: Sermons nos. 12, 50, 53, 73, 74, 91, 127, 129, 135, 136, 143, also 58, 107(?), 138(?), 149, 152.

## CHAPTER ONE

## ST. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS

Reliable information of the life of St. Peter Chryso-  
logus is lacking. His oldest biography<sup>1</sup> which was written  
about 830 by Abbot Agnellus, the ecclesiastical historian of  
Ravenna, gives but scanty information about him, and merits  
only limited credence.<sup>2</sup>

According to accepted tradition,<sup>3</sup> St. Peter was born  
around 405 at Forum Cornelii, now called Imola, a town about  
twenty miles due west of Ravenna in northern Italy. He was  
baptized, educated and ordained deacon by Cornelius, Bishop of  
Imola, and he was elevated to the Bishopric of Ravenna, prob-  
ably around 433, under Pope Sixtus III.

St. Peter shared the confidence of St. Leo the Great<sup>4</sup>  
and enjoyed the patronage of the Emperor Valentinian III and  
his mother, Galla Placidia.<sup>5</sup> He built and decorated many  
churches. His piety and zeal won for him the name of Chryso-  
logus. St. Peter was a true shepherd to his flock, leading

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Migne (PL 52, 13-20; 106, 554-559).

<sup>2</sup>G. Bardy, "Pierre Chrysologue," Dictionnaire de  
Théologie Catholique, XII, cols. 1916-1917 (Paris: 1935).

<sup>3</sup>O. Bardenhewer, Patrology (St. Louis: Herder, 1908),  
p. 526. Cf. also F. Cayré, Manual of Patrology and History  
of Theology, trans. by H. Howitt (Rome: 1940), p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Bardenhewer, op. cit., p. 526.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Sermon 130 (PL 52, 556-557).

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them by example and precept.

He died at Imola on December 2, 450, being about 44 years of age, and was buried in the Basilica of St. Cassian in that city. In 1729, Pope Benedict XIII bestowed on him the title of Doctor of the Church. His liturgical feast is celebrated in the universal Church on December 4.

St. Peter Chrysologus lived in turbulent times. Many political and social changes were brought about by the migration of tribes and the founding of new empires. It was a time in many ways not unlike our own--a time of confusion, fear and social disorders.

Harassed from without by the frightening condition of the world, the Church was also deeply concerned with internal doctrinal controversies. The Nestorian and Monophysite heresies troubled the seventeen years of Peter's episcopate. The heresy of Nestorius was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431. It was not until after the death of St. Peter Chrysologus that the great Pope St. Leo after a long, hard struggle won a resounding victory against the Monophysite heresy at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. All during this period, weighty theological questions were debated, clarified or rejected.

Against this background of insecurity in the empire and difficulty within the Church, St. Peter Chrysologus stood firm as a rock, never compromising with evil of any sort. He went calmly about his work, confident of the continuance of the

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Church, undismayed by the wars and rumours of wars about him.

For the solution of doctrinal difficulties he pointed to the Pope of Rome. When the Oriental monk, Eutyches, was condemned for heresy by Bishop Flavian at a Synod of Constantinople in 448 and refused to submit, he appealed to the Bishop of Ravenna for moral support. St. Peter wrote him a very significant letter.

We exhort you, most esteemed brother, to submit to what has been written by the Bishop of Rome, because Blessed Peter, who still lives and presides in his See, teaches the truth of the faith to those who seek it; for we, in the interests of peace and of the faith, cannot judge matters of faith except in harmony with the Bishop of the Roman city.<sup>6</sup>

The letter to Eutyches is the only piece of correspondence of St. Peter that has been preserved. But we have under his name a great number of sermons which one of his successors, Felix (707-717), collected at the beginning of the eighth century. One hundred and seventy-six sermons were published by Migne in his Patrologia Latina.<sup>7</sup> Of this collection, Glorieux rejects sixteen as unauthentic or dubious, or as belonging to other authors.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Epistle 25, among the letters of Leo the Great, Migne (PL 54, 739-744).

<sup>7</sup>J. P. Migne, S. Petri Chrysologi Archiepiscopi Ravennatis Opera Omnia, et S. Valeriani Episcopi Cemeliensis Scripta Universa, PL 52 (Paris: 1894).

<sup>8</sup>T. Glorieux, "Pour révaloriser Migne: Tables rectificatives." Mélanges de science religieuse 9 (1952), cahier supplémentaire, p. 36.

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An examination of the sermons of St. Peter will show that they are almost saturated with references to Sacred Scripture. He was constantly explaining passages from the Gospels, the Psalms, or sections of the Epistles of St. Paul. St. Peter tried to perfect the research for the literal sense by seeking for a spiritual sense.<sup>9</sup> He tells us: "The historical narrative should always be raised to a higher meaning, and mysteries of the future should become known through figures of the present."<sup>10</sup>

All the sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus, although usually very short, are works of Christian oratory which earned for their author the remarkable name of Chrysologus. He is first called this name by Agnellus, but there is reason to believe that the epithet is contemporaneous with St. Peter.<sup>11</sup> His sermons are composed with winning eloquence and their lively and colourful style is fully adapted both to the expression of clear and practical thought vigorously phrased and the emphasis of clever antithesis.<sup>12</sup> J. H. Baxter, who has studied the style and characteristics of St. Peter as an aid to future

<sup>9</sup>Cayré, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>10</sup>Sermon 36. The number following the quotations in this thesis is the number of the sermon in Migne. The translation, unless otherwise stated, is taken from Saint Peter Chrysologus, Selected Sermons, and Saint Valerian, Homilies, translated by George E. Ganss, S.J.

<sup>11</sup>Bardenhewer, op. cit., p. 527.

<sup>12</sup>Cayré, op. cit.

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critical study of his sermons speaks of their charm being due to their liveliness and vivacity and thinks they must have gripped the attention of the congregation.<sup>13</sup>

However, the sermons of St. Peter are not displays of empty oratory. Eugene Schlitz, among others, finds that it is especially because of the theological riches of St. Peter's writings that he has justly merited the title of Chrysologus that history has bestowed on him.<sup>14</sup>

Having seen something now of the man, his times, and his work, one is prepared to explore the "forgotten treasure"<sup>15</sup> of his sermons to see how St. Peter Chrysologus presented the important doctrine of divine adoption.

<sup>13</sup>J. H. Baxter, "The Homilies of St. Peter Chrysologus," Journal of Theological Studies, 22 (1921), p. 255.

<sup>14</sup>"Si notre saint Docteur n'a pas mérité son beau surnom par son style, assez brillant, mais monotone et recherché, il y a droit par la richesse théologique de ses sermons bien dignes d'un évêque dont la 'parole est d'or'". Eugene Schlitz, "Un Trésor Oublié - Saint Pierre Chrysologue comme Théologien," Nouvelle Revue Théologique, 55 (1928), p. 276.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

## THE WONDROUS GIFT OF DIVINE ADOPTION

## I. ST. PETER'S APPROACH TO DIVINE ADOPTION

In presenting the teaching of St. Peter Chrysologus on divine adoption, it seems best to consider first of all his own attitude toward this great mystery. Throughout his sermons, St. Peter dwells frequently on the sublime dignity of the children of God who have been made a heavenly race through the goodness of the Father. The contemplation of this mystery makes his tongue eloquent; he becomes the Golden Orator. An often-quoted reference to this doctrine is found in his sermon introducing the Lord's Prayer in a catechetical instruction to the catechumens.

What is more awesome: that God gives Himself to earth, or that He places you in Heaven? That He Himself enters a union with flesh, or that He causes you to enter into a sharing of the Divinity? That He Himself accepts death, or that He recovers you from death? That He Himself is born into your state of slavery, or that He makes you to be free children of His own? That He takes your poverty upon Himself, or that He makes you His heirs, yes, co-heirs of His unique Self? It is indeed more awesome that earth is transformed into a heaven, that man is changed by a deification, and that those whose lot is slavery get the rights of domination.<sup>1</sup>

Then, lest his audience should feel that this privilege is almost too great for human credence, He says: "Yet,

<sup>1</sup>Sermon 67; Fathers of the Church, vol. 17, p. 115. Henceforth referred to as FC. This passage is quoted by Scheeben in The Mysteries of Christianity, trans. by C. Vollert, p. 317 note.

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why is it strange if He has made men adopted sons of God, since He gave Himself and made Himself into the Son of Man?"<sup>2</sup>

The Christian attitude should be one of joy at the realization of so great an honour. In his sermon on Psalm 99, the joyful song of praise, St. Peter comments:

As we mentioned before, surely we who are already placed within the house of our Father--surely we should strike up the spiritual music of heavenly songs.<sup>3</sup>

## II. MEN BECOME SONS OF GOD IN BAPTISM

The stupendous miracle of divine adoption takes place for the individual man in the sacrament of Baptism. His rebirth in Christ, the glorious life that becomes his, the new obligations he assumes as a son of God, his privilege to reign with Christ, are presented by St. Peter Chrysologus with vigour and feeling. In fact, when he speaks of these great truths of divinization and incorporation into Christ he shows such ardour that he must have inflamed his audience with a great appreciation of their new life and a desire to live to the full their union with Christ.

By the power of this holy sacrament a man is regenerated and transformed into a new life. Sin which enslaved him in the past no longer holds dominion over him. Now he can

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<sup>2</sup>Sermon 70; FC v. 17, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>Sermon 6; FC v. 17, p. 55.

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leave behind the things of earth and possessing heavenly and divine qualities be truly called a man of heaven.<sup>4</sup>

In the ceremony of Baptism, the threefold immersion in water of the new Christian recalls the three-day burial of Christ. As Our Lord rose from the sepulchre to a glorious risen life, so too the faithful must realize, and therefore rejoice, that by Baptism they have risen with Christ to a new life.<sup>5</sup> St. Peter Chrysologus warns his hearers lest they fail to appreciate the true meaning of Baptism. It is no mere external washing, but a real, vital renovation of the whole man, purifying him and directing him to salvation in Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

In a sermon on the Lenten fast, St. Peter refers to the cleansing of the world by the deluge. He sees in this purifying rain a symbol of Christian Baptism in which men born for death are reborn to life.

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<sup>4</sup>Sermon 137 (PL 52, 569): "At vero Christi baptismata sic regenerat, sic immutat, sic hominem reddit ex vetere novum, ut praeterita nesciat, non recordetur antiqua, qui de terreno coelestis jam coelestia possidet et divina."

<sup>5</sup>Sermon 113 (PL 52, 511): "Audiant fideles, et intelligant: quemadmodum triduana Domini sepultura trina demersione figuratur in baptismo; ut resurrexisse cum Christo, et si necdum corpore, vitae jam novitate congaudeant; sitque totus homo virtutum domicilium, qui receptaculum fuerat ante vitiorum."

<sup>6</sup>Sermon 171 (PL 52, 647): "Pharisaei non diligentiam corporis in discipulis Domini, sed superstitionis suae baptismata perquirebant; nescientes unum baptismata, quod Dominus non lavandis solum, sed in novandis animabus et corporibus invenisset; quod non corpus ad cultum vitae, sed conscientiam dilueret ad salutem."

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This happened that the world . . . might rejoice over this second birth by such a baptism; that it might know that it owes the fact of its existence not to nature, but to the gift of its Creator; that the earth, the source of our body, might have a foretaste of the very form of our baptism; and finally, that the earth, which previously was producing men born for death, might produce them now as men reborn unto life.<sup>7</sup>

The first contact with the grace of Christ absolves the soul from the law of death. St. Peter expresses this very clearly: "We are set free by the grace of Christ from the Law of death, and we receive within ourselves the Holy Spirit as warrior and victor over vices."<sup>8</sup>

The purification of the soul and the remission of all punishment due to sin constitute the negative aspect of Baptism. St. Peter emphasizes the positive effects of Baptism. The soul is now truly alive in and through Christ, alive in innocence and grace, that grace which He has won for mankind.<sup>9</sup> He tries to explain this great change which has been accomplished by the grace of Christ. Rebirth in Christ, he tells us, brings to an end the dominion of the vanities of earthly life in us.

The new Christian must now be ready to die to preserve that innocence which is his. He must strive to emulate Christ's life of virtue and thus attain sanctity. Let those who enter

<sup>7</sup>Sermon 166; FC v. 17, p. 273.

<sup>8</sup>Sermon 115; FC v. 17, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

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upon this new life in Christ know that it is theirs to live with Christ and to rejoice with Him eternally.<sup>10</sup>

In an excellent sermon contrasting the slavery of sin with the slavery of grace,<sup>11</sup> St. Peter explains to his flock that it is true that they have been set free from the death of sin, but that now they must render obedience to the new laws to which Christians must conform. This slavery does not restrain, it liberates. It does not burden, it honours. This is summed up very well in the following passage:

Sin previously told the lie that you, the unhappy man whom it was holding captive, were free. Now, grace calls you its slave; and that it might make you truly free, it has made you the adopted son of God Himself.<sup>12</sup>

There are many striking passages extolling the dignity of the adopted son of God. He becomes a consort, a partner, and a participant of the divine nature. No longer is his life to be limited by the bonds of earth, but its fullness is found

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<sup>10</sup>Sermon 113 (PL 52, 511-512): "Quod autem dixit: In novitate vitae ambulemus, quae superius diximus, illa confirmat, ut si necdum hoc corpore, vita tamen jam totus immutatus incedat; intelligat se, et dominetur elementis, qui elementis hactenus per ignorantiam serviebat; largiatur sua per gloriam, qui prius turpiter furabatur aliena; et qui carnis exercebat illicita, contemnat etiam licentias corporales, et qui innocentiam hactenus impie moliebatur exstinguere, pro innocentia gloriosius ipse moriatur. Et quid plura? Si ex vetere homine jam novus effectus est, vitiorum gurgitem in fontem commutat ipse virtutum. Usque ad finem autem lectionis hoc ingerit beatus Apostolus, hoc demonstrat, illum posse cum Christo vivere, illum regnare cum Christo, qui resurgentis Christi innocentiam sequitur, imitatur vitam, implere nititur sanctitatem."

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Rom. 6:15-21.

<sup>12</sup>Sermon 114; FC v. 17, p. 188.

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rather in union with God. He is henceforth a partner of life, not death, and the fruit of his life now belongs to God, and not to the demands of flesh.<sup>13</sup>

In a sermon on the apparition of Christ to the women returning from the tomb, St. Peter dwells lovingly on Our Lord's use of the word "brethren".<sup>14</sup>

When He arose from the dead, Christ reassumed the form of man, He did not relinquish it. Therefore, He gives the name of brethren to those whom He made to be brothers of His own self. He names those brethren whom He made adopted sons of His Father. He names those brethren, whom He, the kind Heir, made His co-heirs.<sup>15</sup>

As a consequence of his rebirth in Christ, the Christian must ever be mindful of his dignity. Knowing himself to be a son of God, he must act accordingly.<sup>16</sup> He whose lineage is derived from heaven, should manifest in his life the divine virtues that by becoming a shining image of the Father by a holy way of life, he may prove himself a son of God.<sup>17</sup> This

<sup>13</sup>Sermon 115; FC v. 17, p. 192.

<sup>14</sup>Matt. 28:5-20.

<sup>15</sup>Sermon 80; FC v. 17, p. 131.

<sup>16</sup>Sermon 10 (PL 52, 215): "Audivimus fratres quo nos tulit divina dignatio, quo paternitas extulit nos superna; credamus non Dei filios, respondeamus generi; vivamus coelo; patrem similitudine referamus, ne perdamus vitiis quod sumus per gratiam consecuti. Afferte Domino, filii Dei. Videtis, quia coelestis Pater sentit amorem donis, datis affectum, probat muneribus charitatem. Et revera, fratres, filium se nescit, visceribus caret, naturam negat, ingratus est patri, qui auctorem vitae suae non obsequiis placat, non devincit cultu, muneribus non honorat."

<sup>17</sup>Sermon 67; FC v. 17, p. 116.

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same idea is expressed more fully later on:

Let us, who have been reborn to the likeness of our Lord . . . and [whom] God adopted as His sons--let us bear the image of our Creator in a perfect reproduction. Let it be a reproduction not of that majesty in which He is unique, but of that innocence, simplicity, meekness, patience, humility, mercy, and peacefulness by which He deigned to become and to be one with us.<sup>18</sup>

Commenting on the words of St. Paul: "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed in the newness of your minds,"<sup>19</sup> St. Peter tells his hearers to model their nature on that of the Saviour so that "the man of heaven may walk the earth with a heavenly deportment."<sup>20</sup>

## III. UNION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL IN CHRIST

Through grace the adopted son of God enters into the closest union with Christ and the other members of the Church and is bound together with them into one Mystical Body, whose soul is the Holy Spirit.

St. Peter Chrysologus when speaking of the Mystical Body likes to quote St. Paul and elaborate on his passages. He calls St. Paul's careful explanation of the Mystical Body<sup>21</sup> the pattern of the new man. He describes St. Paul as struggling to make sure that the Mystical Body may through the

<sup>18</sup>

Sermon 117; FC v. 17, p. 201.

<sup>19</sup>

Rom. 12:2.

<sup>20</sup>

Sermon 120; FC v. 17, p. 205. Cf. also M. J. Scheeben, The Glories of Divine Grace, trans. by P. Shaughnessy (St. Meinrad, Indiana: 1949), Part IV, p. 9. Here, Scheeben quotes Chrysologus, Sermon 23.

<sup>21</sup>

Rom. 12.

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harmony and cooperation of the members hold fast its life which is characteristic of heaven and its practices of holiness.<sup>22</sup>

Each member of the Mystical Body gains from the good done by the other members. All the members are to regard what any one member has done as their own. No member which has the honour of being part of the whole body can be of less importance. All are so closely united by grace that the merit of one member redounds to the benefit of the whole body.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, when one member of the Mystical Body is in danger or in affliction, the other members should intercede for him by prayers and tears, for when one member suffers, all suffer. The deep concern of St. Peter Chrysologus for those in need shows itself in the following pleading message:

And truly, brethren, if we were one, like one human body, if we believed our perishing fellow men to be parts of our very selves, then by afflicting ourselves with fasting, by the groans of our prayers, and by copious tears we would cry out unceasingly: 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!'<sup>24</sup> Also, we would try to aid ourselves in the persons of our brethren.<sup>25</sup>

St. Peter is very emphatic in his teaching on unity among all the sons of God. In clear and concise words he explains the necessity of unity among the faithful: "The Law was not given for one, but for all. So, too, Christ came not

<sup>22</sup>Sermon 120; FC v. 17, p. 205.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Matt. 8:23-27.

<sup>25</sup>Sermon 20; FC v. 17, p. 64.

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for one or to one, but to all and for all."<sup>26</sup> He uses the words of the Prophet: "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,"<sup>27</sup> to instruct his congregation about the absolute need for unity. Unity, not singularity, is acceptable to God and receives His blessing.<sup>28</sup>

## IV. THE ADOPTED SON AND FUTURE GLORY

Every adopted son is destined to possess the property of His heavenly Father. "But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ."<sup>29</sup>

What is God's property if not the vision of His own infinite perfections, the contemplation of the wonders that are within Himself?

Such is the good to which divine adoption confers a right and an aptitude. Such is the heritage for which divine sonship prepares the soul and to which, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, the whole being and all of creation aspire.<sup>30</sup>

Peter Chrysologus reminds his hearers of this right when he says that those who have entered upon a new life in Christ should know that it is theirs to live with Christ and to reign with Him eternally.<sup>31</sup> The Christian is truly a son of

<sup>26</sup>Sermon 132; FC v. 17, p. 218.

<sup>27</sup>Ps. 132:1.

<sup>28</sup>Sermon 132, p. 219.

<sup>29</sup>Rom. 8:17.

<sup>30</sup>Rom. 8:9-22.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. footnote 10, p. 10.

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the heavenly Father, an heir of God, a co-heir of Christ, a consort of the heavenly kingdom, a citizen of heaven, a possessor of paradise. These riches will bring happiness so satisfying and lasting that it is beyond adequate description. A letter from a dear friend is cherished, but his actual coming deepens the former joy; flowers are admired for their beauty, but the appearance of the fruit gives the satisfaction of fulfilment. So, although our union in Christ here below is lofty and unbelievable, it is but a beginning and foreshadowing of the eventual union and possession of God.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Sermon 62 (PL 52, 372-373): "Si autem quod non videmus speramus, per patientiam expectamus. Spes ad futura tendit, fides ad promissa transmittit; cum res venerit, advenerit et promissa, spes desinit, fides cessat. Dulcis est epistola, sed usque dum veniat ipse qui misit; necessarium chirographum, sed usque ad debiti redditionem; grati flores, sed usque dum veniatur ad poma. Sed presentia epistolam delet, rumpit solutio cautionem, flores consummuntur a pomis: et ideo te superni Patris filium, haeredem Dei, cohaeredem Christi, participem regni coelestis, confessorem divini iudicis, coeli incolam, paradisi possessorem modo designatum te fide noveris; modo spe, non re noveris te promotum. Et ideo suscipite fidem, tenete spem, dicite symbolum, ut ad rem et ad illa valeatis bona quae praediximus pervenire."

## CHAPTER III

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE ADOPTED SON WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER

Through Baptism a man is made partaker of the divine nature and is taken into the very family of God. God becomes his Father, God's only-begotten Son becomes his Brother, and the Holy Spirit dwells within him. This is in accord with Christian revelation. These titles suggest the idea of special relationship with each of the three Divine Persons.

The apparent contradiction between the unity of essence in the three Divine Persons and these special relationships with the soul of the just man is explained by the doctrine of appropriation.<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas expresses it in this way: "Although [the act of] adoption is common to the whole Trinity, it is appropriated to the Father as author, to the Son as exemplar, and to the Holy Ghost as imprinting the likeness of this exemplar on us."<sup>2</sup>

In studying the sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus to see how he taught the relationship of the adopted son with the Trinity, it will be convenient to divide this study into three sections which will treat of the relationship of the son of God with each of the three Divine Persons according to the doctrine of appropriation as mentioned above. The present

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Scheeben, Nature and Grace, p. 174.  
<sup>2</sup>Summa theol., III a, q. 23, a. 2.

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chapter deals with his relationship with his heavenly Father.

The distinction between Christ, who is the natural Son of the Father, and the adopted and regenerated sons of God is clearly made by Chrysologus. By nature, neither man nor any other created being, is a child of God. He is only a creature subject to Him, and privileged to serve Him as a subject serves his King and Lord, and to glorify Him, his ultimate end. In this natural condition, God is not, strictly speaking, his Father. Man has received life from God, but he does not receive a communication of divine life from Him.

Only the Eternal Word is the Son of God by nature. He alone is truly begotten of the Father. He alone receives from the First Person the same divine nature in its entirety, and possesses it in common with Him, as His Son.

In his sermon on the Apostles' Creed, St. Peter explains this mystery as follows:

He who has wished to be called a Father, to be denoted as a Father, is kindly making clear that He has a Son, whom he did not receive at any point of time, or beget in time, or have in His care merely for a time. Divinity does not take a beginning, or admit an end, or any succession; it is incapable of any waning. Not amid any pains does God bring forth His Son; He manifests that because of His powers the Son is existent. He does not make as something outside Himself that Being which is from Himself, but he generates that Being; while the Being is inside Himself, He discloses and reveals the fact. The Son has proceeded from the Father, but not withdrawn from Him. Neither has He come forth from the Father as one destined to succeed the Father, but as one who will remain always in the Father.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Sermon 57; EC v. 17, p. 106.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE ADOPTED SON WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER 18

In another sermon, Chrysologus explains the difference between the Eternal Son of God and adopted sons:

You have heard: Father of Christ; believe that He is this through His substance. You have heard that He is your Father; believe that He is this through His grace. He eternally possessed the power that His Son should be existent; He recently allowed you to become His son.<sup>4</sup>

God possessed His Word from all eternity. He was the natural Heir. But God wished to show to other creatures the benevolence and complacence which He had for His own eternal Son. He created the world and peopled it with living beings over which He exercised with an admirable solicitude all the attentions of His Providence. But that was not enough. To show a love for His creatures that resembled His love for His own Divine Son, He adopted other sons.<sup>5</sup>

The difference between natural birth and the new birth to grace, between being born and being reborn, is clarified for his hearers by St. Peter Chrysologus. He addresses those who have been reborn and reformed to the image of the Creator, and exhorts them to fulfill what the Apostle commands<sup>6</sup> so that they might bear and enhance the Creator's image in themselves by their way of acting.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Sermon 67; FC v. 17, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup>Sermon 148; FC v. 17, p. 249.

<sup>6</sup>1 Cor. 15:49. "Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly."

<sup>7</sup>Sermon 2; FC v. 17, p. 32.

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In speaking of the Prodigal Son, St. Peter sees a special significance in the Prodigal's words: "I am not worthy to be called thy son."<sup>8</sup> St. Peter remarks that the son does not say: "I am not worthy to be thy son," but "I am not worthy to be called thy son." The reason given by St. Peter is that to be called pertains to grace; to be pertains to nature. (Italics mine.)

A summary of the doctrine of adoption is made by Peter Chrysologus when he speaks of the First Person of the Trinity Who gave Himself to us as a Father, Who adopted us as His children, Who made us heirs of His possessions, dignified us with His name, Who gave us His honour and His kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

Often and in many different ways, the zealous bishop tells his flock of the Father's surpassing love for His children. He emphasizes the fact that according to His own revelation, He wishes His children to regard Him as a Father. He speaks of Him "who has wished to be called a Father, to be denoted as a Father."<sup>10</sup>

Commenting on St. Paul's words "I exhort you, by the mercy of God,"<sup>11</sup> St. Peter Chrysologus shows that God has a greater desire to be loved than feared. He expresses this

<sup>8</sup>Sermon 2; FC v. 17, p. 32.  
<sup>9</sup>Sermon 67; FC v. 17, p. 117.  
<sup>10</sup>Sermon 57; FC v. 17, p. 106.  
<sup>11</sup>Rom. 12:1.

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well in the following citation:

God is asking [through Paul] because He wants to be not so much a Lord as a Father. God is asking through His mercy, that He may not punish through His severity. Hear God asking: 'I have spread forth my hands all the day.'<sup>12</sup> Is not He who spreads forth His hands asking by His very demeanor? . . . He opens His arms, He enlarges His heart, He proffers His breast, He invites us to His bosom, He lays open His lap, that He may show Himself a Father by all this affectionate entreaty.<sup>13</sup>

Where fear is too great there cannot be love.<sup>14</sup> An attitude of fear was common in the Old Testament. To replace this fear with love, and to keep the world from falling into ruin because of fear, God in His dealings with Noe, Abraham, Jacob and Moses "continually acts to recall it with love, to invite it back by grace, to hold it tight in charity, and embrace it with affection."<sup>15</sup>

St. Peter speaks of God as addressing Noe with pleasing language, giving kindly confidence and fatherly instruction about the present and consoling him about the future.<sup>16</sup>

As to Abraham, Peter says that God favoured him with many benefits so that drawn by the striking sweetness of God's charity, he might learn to love God rather than to fear Him.<sup>17</sup> So, too, the kindness of God to Jacob had as its purpose to

<sup>12</sup>Isa. 65:2.

<sup>13</sup>Sermon 108; FC v. 17, p. 167.

<sup>14</sup>Sermon 147; FC v. 17, p. 244.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

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make him love, not fear, the father of the conflict.<sup>18</sup> Passing on to Moses, St. Peter Chrysologus speaks of God summoning him by His fatherly voice and addressing him with paternal love.<sup>19</sup>

If such is the case in God's dealings with the people of the Old Law, how much more so is it not with the Christian? The Jews called God their Father, but on their lips the term had not the fullness of meaning that it has for the Christian. The latter is commanded to call God his Father.<sup>20</sup> The holy bishop becomes eloquent at the very thought of addressing God as Father.

May our hearts perceive God as our Father! Our voice should proclaim this, our tongue should utter it, our spirit should shout it aloud; and everything that is in us should be in tune with grace, not fear. For, He who has changed from a judge into a Father has wished to be loved, not feared.<sup>21</sup>

The Father shows His love in many ways. Not only does He create a universe with the necessary means for sustaining the life of His creatures, but He shows His largess by adding to the necessities many other signs of His love in order to brighten the lives of His children, as St. Peter so aptly puts it in the following quotation:

<sup>18</sup>Gen. 32:24-32.

<sup>19</sup>Sermon 147; FC v. 17, p. 245.

<sup>20</sup>Matt. 6:9.

<sup>21</sup>Sermon 67; FC v. 17, p. 116. Cf. Scheeben, Nature and Grace, p. 345.

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For you the streams of light dispel the encircling gloom. For you the night has been softened. For you the day has been measured off. For you the sky has been made to drop down the varied brilliance of the sun, the moon, and the stars. For you the earth has been beautified like a picture, with flowers, groves, and fruits. For you has been created that marvelous multitude of living creatures, containing so many beautiful beings in air, fields, and water, to keep sad solitude from spoiling the joy of the new world.<sup>22</sup>

But the Father shows His goodness in a still greater way. He creates man, He makes him lord of earthly creatures. That he might possess reason in common with God, although having a body in common with the animals, God gives him a soul. But He does more. To add to all this He puts His image in man that a visible likeness might make the invisible Creator present on earth.<sup>23</sup>

God, having created man, continues to watch over him with paternal love and to provide for all his needs. St. Peter Chrysologus words this very well:

Do you think that, in a niggardly spirit, He will supply neither bread nor clothing? He granted you existence when you were not. Whatever you have, O man, He gave to you. When you were living for yourself and your own pleasures, He did not refuse the necessities of food. Do you think that He will not give bread or clothing to one applying himself to His virtues and tasks?<sup>24</sup>

The heavenly Father also watches over and protects His children. Peter, following the example of Our Lord, evokes

<sup>22</sup>Sermon 148; FC v. 17, p. 248.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>24</sup>Sermon 170; FC v. 17, p. 281.

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the picture of the hen and her chicks<sup>25</sup> to symbolize this protective care of God for His own. "Now, like a hen, He leads you forth and round about. He calls you, receives, protects, fondles, carries, encircles, and embraces you."<sup>26</sup> St. Peter explains further that God even lives in their homes to nourish them, rear them and instruct them in regard to such lowly and mundane matters as knowledge and preparation of native, home-made foods.<sup>27</sup>

In order to keep His children from straying, His love surrounds them like a hedge to keep them from leaving His house. His affection restrains them from wandering from the path of virtue. Rather, they are nourished at their Father's table with the food of virtue, the banquet of salvation and with the delights of uprightness and glory.<sup>28</sup> Chrysologus advises all to remain with this good Father, with this devoted Parent and in this way to avoid the Devil's snares and thus always enjoy their Father's goods.<sup>29</sup>

However, if one is unfortunate enough to stray away, Peter reminds him that his Father like a good shepherd,<sup>30</sup> will seek him out as he strays in the mountain heights. "He alone

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<sup>25</sup>Matt. 23:37.

<sup>26</sup>Sermon 170; FC v. 17, p. 278.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Sermon 1; FC v. 17, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup>Sermon 2; FC v. 17, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup>John 10:1-18.

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finds you, puts you on His shoulders. To keep you from being seized in earthly pastures by the teeth of the wolves, He carries and leads you to the sheepfolds of heaven."<sup>31</sup>

The love of the Father does not prevent Him from sending or permitting trials for the good of His children. The sufferings of the Holy Innocents and the anguish of their mothers are described in detail by St. Peter. To human eyes it looks as if God deserted these innocents, that He neglected them, that He contemned and abandoned them. However, Peter shows that it is quite the contrary. God did not condemn them, He promoted them. He enabled them to triumph. He gave them crowns. He did not abandon them but took them to Himself.<sup>32</sup>

But how does St. Peter Chrysologus explain God's dealings with an erring son? Does God's love for such a son cease? St. Peter uses the parable of the prodigal son to show God's special love and mercy in the case of a wayward member of His flock.

But first, it will be well to see how Peter describes the state of the sinner in order to appreciate more fully the significance of his return to his Father. Using the prodigal son as type of the sinner, he contrasts his circumstances before and after his decision to free himself from his father's

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<sup>31</sup>Sermon 170; FC v. 17, p. 278.

<sup>32</sup>Sermon 152; FC v. 17, p. 257.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE ADOPTED SON WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER 25

authority. In his father's house "all is pleasing order, free service, perfect care, filial reverence, kindly correction, rich poverty, unworried possession. The work is done for the father, but the fruit redounds to the sons."<sup>33</sup> His sin of covetousness took him away from his father's bosom, expelled him from his house, withdrew him from his country, despoiled him of everything. It separated him from a devoted father, and made him the fellow of swine.<sup>34</sup> Peter comments on this later when he calls the prodigal son "a deserter from affection, a refugee from fatherly love."<sup>35</sup>

What considerations bring the son to repentance? "He came to himself," St. Peter says. "He first returned to himself that he might return to his father."<sup>36</sup> Peter makes the comment that the man who is unmindful of his father's devotion and forgetful of his parent's love, departs from himself.<sup>37</sup> It was hunger that made the son understand his father and determine to return to him. St. Peter Chrysologus asks: "With what hope? With what confidence? With what assurance?"<sup>38</sup> Then the zealous bishop goes on to give in detail the reasoning of the prodigal son:

<sup>33</sup> Sermon 1; FC v. 17, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> Sermon 2; FC v. 17, p. 30.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE ADOPTED SON WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER 26

He is a father. I have squandered the marks of a son; he has not lost the characteristics of a father. It is not a stranger who intercedes with a father; rather, it is that affection inside his own breast which intervenes and pleads. The father's heart is moved to beget his son again through forgiveness. I shall go as a culprit to a father. But a father, on seeing his son, soon covers up the guilt. He conceals his role of judge, and is more eager to fulfil that of father. He wants his son to return, not to perish, and soon changes his condemnation into forgiveness.<sup>39</sup>

It can be seen from the above that the son truly understood his father, and that St. Peter who puts these words into the mouth of the prodigal son understood the Heavenly Father whom he had in mind when depicting the thoughts of the younger son.

Peter Chrysologus makes it clear that there is no repentance without God's grace. The erring son must "seek the divine Father by faith."<sup>40</sup> "The long way off,"<sup>41</sup> according to Peter, indicates that "he who is coming is coming to do penance, but he has not yet arrived at grace. He is coming to his Father's house, but he has not yet reached the glory of his former condition, appearance and honor."<sup>42</sup>

Grace is represented in the parable by the light coming from the father's countenance. This light illumined the face of the approaching son in such a way that the darkness on

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Sermon 3; FC v. 17, p. 35.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE ADOPTED SON WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER 27

the guilty son's face was dispelled.<sup>43</sup> Sin had darkened his understanding and ruined his power of perception.<sup>44</sup> Grace was necessary to restore light. Here are St. Peter's words:

Clearly, if the heavenly Father had not cast His rays upon the returning son's face, if He had not lifted the mist of his shame by the light streaming from His own glance, that son would never have seen God's brilliant face.<sup>45</sup>

Our heavenly Father's "goodness and indescribable mercy"<sup>46</sup> are typified by the father's welcome of his son. The father is moved with compassion. He runs forward to meet him. "It was not so much by a movement of the body, as by his fatherly affection."<sup>47</sup> He fell upon his neck, "not because his muscles failed, but because of his compassion and his eagerness to remove the burden from his son by a burden of love and raise him up."<sup>48</sup> Peter says that the son is not weighed down but helped by the burden of his father. He compares this burden to that referred to in Scripture: "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened. My burden is light."<sup>49</sup>

The father gives his son the kiss of forgiveness. This is how the father corrects his wayward son, "not by floggings

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Matt. 11:28-30.

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but by kisses."<sup>50</sup> The power of love overlooked the transgressions. The father redeemed the sins of his son by his kiss and covered them by his embrace.<sup>51</sup>

Then St. Peter Chrysologus refers to the heavenly Father whose love is so great that He forgives all the offences of His repentant children no matter what their number or their enormity. He encourages those among his hearers who may have strayed away to come back to their kind Father, telling them not to fear returning to such a Father even if they had come to "the whole rocky coast of impurity and to complete ruin."<sup>52</sup> There is never need for despair, never need for fear. A fatherly kiss does not strike up fear, his forgiving embrace is not disturbing. The father is not seizing his son for punishment but to show him forgiveness.<sup>53</sup>

But if the great mercy of the Father astonishes us, what can be said of the Father's added bounty after forgiving sin? The robe, the ring of gold and the fatted calf are only symbols of the special marks of love which the Father bestows on repentant sinners. There is no lengthy interrogation as to the cause of the son's default. The father orders the best robe for his son; he covers up his guilt. He heals his wounds

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>51</sup>Sermon 3; FC v. 17, p. 37.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE ADOPTED SON WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER 29

so as not to leave a scar or blemish.<sup>54</sup> The mercy which a father knows is not a tardy kind. He gets his joy from pardon rather than from justice.<sup>55</sup> He rejoices because he has recovered his son, and he regards nothing as lost. St. Peter exclaims: "O what the force of love accomplishes! To a son, however base, he knows not how to be, he cannot be, less than a father."<sup>56</sup>

The ring signifies that the father is not content to restore the innocence of his son, but that he also gives back his former honour.<sup>57</sup> In fact, Peter adds that before the heavenly Father, the son rises higher<sup>58</sup> because of pardon than he fell low because of guilt.<sup>59</sup>

The good father ordered his servants to prepare the fatted calf. St. Peter makes the comment that an ordinary calf is not good enough; it must be a special one that has been fattened. In this Chrysologus sees the superabounding love of the father.<sup>60</sup> Through the death of a calf, a dead

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 38

<sup>56</sup>Sermon 4; FC v. 17, p. 42.

<sup>57</sup>Sermon 3; FC v. 17, p. 38.

<sup>58</sup>"Because in reformation through repentance grace ordinarily rises higher," remarks Dominicus Mita (PL 52, 191), in his edition of the sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus, Sancti Petri Chrysologi Forocoreneliensis Ravennatum archiepiscopi opera omnia, Dominicus Mita ed. (Venice: 1742). Mita gives numerous references to other Fathers who express this same idea.

<sup>59</sup>Sermon 3; FC v. 17, p. 35.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

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son is resuscitated, and one calf is sacrificed for the feasting of the entire family.<sup>61</sup> Peter sees in the calf a figure of Jesus Christ "who was slain at the command of the Father."<sup>62</sup>

At the return of the younger son, the whole household danced and rejoiced and sang heavenly music. In his allegorical interpretation of the return of the prodigal son, St. Peter speaks of the call of the Gentiles to the faith and to grace, and of the heavenly Father's joy in receiving them. He must have awakened a responsive chord in the hearts of his audience when he exclaimed:

Therefore, it is fitting that today, at this great joy of God the Father, we, too, should take up the psalm, use the drum, set up the organ, play the zither, and make David's melody resound.<sup>63</sup>

It is evident that Chrysologus spoke at length of the prodigal son and of his return. He himself tells us that his purpose is to open up to his hearers "an unfathomable revelation"<sup>64</sup> of the love of the Father.

The greatest proof of the heavenly Father's love is the sending to earth of His own beloved Son to be the Elder Brother and Pattern for all the other sons of God. The next section will deal with the teaching of St. Peter Chrysologus in connection with this mystery.

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<sup>61</sup>An allusion to the Eucharist

<sup>62</sup>Sermon 5; FC v. 17, p. 50.

<sup>63</sup>Sermon 6; FC v. 17, p. 52.

<sup>64</sup>Sermon 1; FC v. 17, p. 25.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE ADOPTED SON AND HIS ELDER BROTHER

With St. Peter Chrysologus it has been seen that the baptized person becomes an adopted son of the Heavenly Father. This adoptive sonship is fully achieved only by union with Christ, God's natural Son. Supernatural adoption is a reproduction, and, as it were, a continuation of Christ's sonship.

The Father has only one Son by nature, and He cannot communicate His divine essence in itself to others. But He can confer a created participation in it upon creatures endowed with reason, and thus give His only-begotten Son a multitude of brothers. God has willed that the sonship of His Word should be reflected in many souls, so that this sonship might receive more glory. He loves His Son so much that He wishes to contemplate His likeness in many creatures, discover in them His Son's beloved features, love them in Him and embrace them together with Him.<sup>1</sup>

It is natural, then, that the adopted son seek to know more about Christ, His Elder Brother, that he go to Him with the faith and love that Peter Chrysologus encourages, with a faith that seeks understanding so that his love might

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sheeben, Nature and Grace, p. 123.

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also be deepened through knowledge. The simple, direct way in which St. Peter presents the fundamental truths about Christ, of man's destiny in Him, can be a source of knowledge and edification, just as they were for the people of fifth-century Ravenna.

The first part of this chapter will consider the person of Christ as He is presented to us by the wisdom and charity of St. Peter Chrysologus. The second section will give an account of the mystery of the Incarnation as explained by the same holy Doctor.

## I. THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Much of the teaching of St. Peter Chrysologus on the nature and existence of the Son of God is presented with a conscious effort to cope with the prevailing heresies. The bishop of Ravenna is deeply concerned that his people be preserved from all taint of these heresies. It was the age of the Christological heresies. In his sermons there are numerous references to the errors which must be avoided in speaking of the divine and human in the God-Man. St. Peter kept his flock informed and ready to meet the challenge of the times. His ideas are brought out in a simple, clear, and concise fashion. He is always mindful of his obligation to present the fundamental truths of faith to his flock; he adheres to

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his own principle on preaching: "We should speak to the people in popular fashion. The congregation ought to be addressed by ordinary speech."<sup>2</sup>

The Son of God

The person, who enlightened by faith, utters the sublime words, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty," confesses at the same time his belief in the person of the Son of God. St. Peter Chrysologus tells us that belief in the Eternal Father without belief in the Son is not possible; no one can call on the Father without in some way naming also the Son. "The man who names Him Father should already acknowledge the Son."<sup>3</sup> The very fact that God wishes to be called "Father" indicates the existence of the Son.

St. Peter is clear in asserting the true, natural Sonship of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Son existed from all eternity together with the Father, since the Father possesses existence from all eternity. This Son did not begin to exist at some particular point of time. His life with the Father is from all eternity; the Father did not

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<sup>2</sup>Sermon 43 (PL 52, 320); "Populis populariter est loquendum; communio compellanda est sermone communi; omnibus necessaria dicenda sunt more omnium; naturalis lingua chara simplicibus, doctis dulcis: docens loquatur omnibus profutura; ergo hodie imperito verbo veniam dent periti."

<sup>3</sup>Sermon 57 (PL 52, 358): "Jam confiteatur Filium, qui nominat Patrem."

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beget Him in time. This eternal co-existence is of divine truth for us, since it concerns the very life of God, a life which has no beginning, nor admits of any succession.<sup>4</sup>

The Son came forth from the Father; He is the manifestation of the Father; He is the revelation and the possessor of the riches and infinite life of God. There is no increase in life or power in the person of the Son, since there is no decrease or loss in the infinite perfections of the Father because of the Son.<sup>5</sup>

Thus it is that in the light of the exposition which Chrysologus gives to these truths, a confession of the Fatherhood of the First Person tells us so much about the Father and the Son and about their relationship to each other.

In regard to the relationship between the Father and the Son, St. Peter refutes the errors of the Arians and shows wherein lies the truth of faith. Their main objection was against the eternity and consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. They argued that the Father must have preceded the Son, in order to be the principle of generation of the Son, and asked how one could be generated and yet not have a beginning. St. Peter admits that such reasoning holds good in regard to human life, but that there is grave error in

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<sup>4</sup>Sermon 57; FC v. 17, p. 106. Cf. p. 17 of this thesis, footnote 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

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trying to apply these norms to the life of the Holy Trinity. Human beings are conceived and conceive, are born and in turn give birth to others. In their lives there is a beginning and an end; the cycle of death and life, life and death, is inexorable in its regularity and certainty. Chrysologus reminds his listeners that in God there is no time. God does not generate His Son in time; He does not confer a beginning to the One Who receives existence from Him from all eternity.<sup>6</sup>

In instructing his faithful, St. Peter stresses this idea of the eternal generation of the Son, calling it blasphemy to deny it since it would be a denial of the eternal Fatherhood of the First Person.<sup>7</sup> He quotes the memorable words of Christ Himself to show the eternal existence of the

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<sup>6</sup>Sermon 60 (PL 52, 366): "Sed dicit haereticus: Quomodo Pater, si non praecedit? quomodo Filius, si non sequitur? quomodo non dat initium, qui generat? quomodo quod generatur, principium a generante non sumit? Hoc ratio docet, hoc natura probat. Erras, haeretice, hoc habet humana ratio, non habet hoc divina; hoc accipit natura mundi, deitatis non recipit hoc natura; fragilitas humana concipitur, et concipit, parturitur et parturit, generatur et generat, accipit initium et dat finem, mortem suscipit et refundit, et reservat in sobole quidquid suae conditionis est et naturae. Deus vero Pater non genuit in tempore, quia tempus ignorat; non dedit initium, qui initium nescit; non transfudit finem, qui non habet finem: sed sic genuit ex se Filium, ut totum quod in se erat esset et maneret in Filio."

<sup>7</sup>Sermon 62 (PL 52, 373): "Inest Deo pietas, est in Deo semper affectio, paternitas permanet apud illum; semper ergo Filium fuisse credas, ne Patrem semper non fuisse blasphemus. Sed dicis: Si genuit, quomodo semper habuit? quomodo genuit? Qui sic interrogas, fidem negas, quam fateris."

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Son: "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me."<sup>8</sup> "I and the Father are one."<sup>9,10</sup> According to St. Peter Chrysologus, the words of St. John, "He was in the beginning with God",<sup>11</sup> should dispel any doubt as to the eternal begetting of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.<sup>12</sup>

In presenting the sublime truth of the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son, Peter does not hesitate to tell his audience that these ideas cannot be understood by the unaided reason. This reverence for the faith necessary to understand divine truths is often recommended by Chrysologus. The natural desire of reason to seek its own explanation of hidden truths must be sacrificed for the deeper, more-embracing understanding to be found in faith.<sup>13</sup>

However, in spite of several statements to his people that a simple knowledge of the existence of God suffices for them, St. Peter does attempt to give some idea of the inner life and community in the Trinity. He firmly maintains the unity of the Godhead, while safeguarding the difference between the Three Persons. He holds that the distinction of

<sup>8</sup>John 10:38.

<sup>9</sup>John 10:30.

<sup>10</sup>Sermon 61; FC v. 17, p. 112.

<sup>11</sup>John 1:2.

<sup>12</sup>Sermon 57; FC v. 17, p. 106.

<sup>13</sup>Sermon 58; (PL 52, 361): "Aeterna et coaeterna Patris et Filii substantia non gradibus humanis, sed divinis est aestimanda virtutibus."

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Persons in the Trinity in no way serves to destroy the unity of substance among them or to confuse their common life. In like manner, the customary order of naming the three divine Persons should not lead anyone to think that there is some particular order among them in which the Son and the Holy Ghost are inferior in any way.<sup>14</sup>

In another sermon, St. Peter elaborates somewhat on his concept of the unity of substance in the Trinity, and attempts to explain the relationship between the oneness of substance and the distinction of personality in the Trinity. So intimate is the participation of life in the Trinity that the Father lives in the Son, and the Son in the Father. The unity of the Trinity exists in such a way that there is no confusion or separation in the divinity, while at the same time the three Persons are distinct in their individual possession of this divinity. He puts it clearly in the following passage:

There is a unity of the Trinity in such a way that there is no separation in the Godhead. The Father is in Himself in such a way (and without Him the Trinity is not complete) that a distinct personality is in the Father and one in the Son and one in the Holy Spirit, but not a separate divinity.<sup>15</sup>

### The Son of Man

This Second Person of the Holy Trinity, this eternal Son of God, equal to the Father in divinity, took to Himself

<sup>14</sup>Sermon 83; FC v. 17, p. 136.  
<sup>15</sup>Sermon 88; FC v. 17, p. 142.

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a body for the salvation of mankind. The Beginning of all things took a beginning from the Virgin Mary. "When Jesus was born, the Source of things arose, the Maker of the race was begotten, the Creator of nature was born, in order to repair nature, restore the race, re-establish the original state."<sup>16</sup> "The Son of God conferred on the Son of the Virgin, God conferred upon man, Divinity conferred on flesh that which He forever possesses along with the Father and the Holy Spirit."<sup>17</sup> This Incarnate God is the One who is the Author of time,<sup>18</sup> the Creator of all things and Lord of the world.<sup>19</sup>

In his sermon on the calming of the storm at sea, St. Peter expresses these thoughts vividly:

So they [the disciples] ran in fear to the very Pilot of the world, the Ruler of the Universe, the Master of the elements. They begged Him to check the billows, banish the danger, save them in their despair. At length, His mere command controlled the sea, struck back the winds, stopped the whirlwinds, brought back the calm. Then the men who were crossing the sea perceived, believed, and acknowledged that He is the very Creator of everything.<sup>20</sup>

This great God assumed human nature, became true man, entered time and took up His dwelling among men. This is the

<sup>16</sup>Sermon 156; FC v. 17, p. 266.

<sup>17</sup>Sermon 80; FC v. 17, p. 132.

<sup>18</sup>Sermon 131 (PL 52, 560): "Dierum conditor non tenetur die, temporis auctor tempora nescit; sed Christus propter hominem homo natus, et diem suscepit et tempus."

<sup>19</sup>Sermon 50 (PL 52, 340): "Creator rerum, orbis Dominus, posteaquam se propter nos nostra angustiavit in carne, coepit habere humanam patriam, coepit civitatis Judaicae esse civis."

<sup>20</sup>Sermon 20; FC v. 17, p. 62.

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most awe-inspiring wonder of all the wonders of God's goodness and a manifestation of His great love and His desire for a return of love from His children. Hear it in St. Peter's own words:

By the fact that Christ our Lord created the sky, earth, sea, and the great, many, and varied creatures in them, He gave wonderful evidence of His power. By the fact that He assumes human nature, acts the part of man, enters into the centuries, passes through the periods of life, teaches by word, works cures by His power, tells parables, gives examples, and manifests in Himself the burden of our emotions--by all this He reveals that He has an indescribable affection of human love.<sup>21</sup>

The divine Person who lived from all eternity in the union of the Holy Trinity wished to be intimately united with men. He entered the world by being born of Mary, who conceived and bore her divine Son while remaining a virgin. This holy virgin formed the Word of God within herself, "and a humble abode of humanity became a great temple of divinity, and the greatness of a virginal womb assumed Him whom a weak human body alone could not possess."<sup>22</sup> "God, whom the whole of creation does not contain, placed His whole Self in her bosom and made Himself a man."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Sermon 47; FC v. 17, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup>Sermon 144 (PL 52, 586): "Quod erat in principio apud Deum, Verbum Deum intra se virgo reperit, et factum est magnum deitatis templum, quae erat pusillum humanitatis hospitium, et quem non capiebat pusillitas humani corporis, coepit virginalis uteri magnitudo."

<sup>23</sup>Sermon 140; FC v. 17, p. 228.

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Consideration of this great truth made a deep impression on the holy bishop. His words convey the wonder which his soul experiences when he contemplates this mystery.

Before Him the vault of heaven shakes and the angels tremble. No creature bears Him up, nor can all nature bound Him. Yet this one young maiden takes Him into an inner chamber of repose, her bosom. She receives Him, and delights Him with her hospitality. Thus she gives Him a dwelling that she may request a payment, and get as the price for use of her very womb peace for the earth, glory for heaven, salvation for the lost, life for the dead, for those on earth relationship with the saints --even union of God Himself with man.<sup>24</sup>

Christ is clearly presented in St. Peter's sermons as the true Son of God and the true Son of Mary. Even the unbelieving Jews gave evidence, according to his interpretation, to the divine and human sonship of the Word. His neighbours at Nazareth call Him the Son of the carpenter and the Son of Mary.<sup>25</sup> Chrysologus comments that He is truly the Son of a carpenter, but of the One who formed the world and fashioned it from nothing, the Divine Carpenter, God. He is truly the Son of Mary, and the Jews are thus witnesses to the true humanity of Christ, the Son of Mary according to the flesh, the Son of God according to His divinity.<sup>26</sup>

In this one person, the God-Man, are actions that belong to God and actions that belong to man, for the one person

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>25</sup>Matt. 13:53.

<sup>26</sup>Sermon 49 (PL 52, 339): "Dic ergo, Judaeae, fabri filium, ut Dei filium fatearis invitus; dic Mariae, ut verum hominem, sed Virginis filium confitearis impulsus."

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is God and man. Christ, the Man, suffered, died and was buried; He is, lives, reigns, remains and endures as God.<sup>27</sup> He who is the only Son of God, the Heir of God, entered time and took up a human nature to exalt that very nature and confer on it the inheritance of grace and the kingdom of God. Men who were poor and in slavery were made co-heirs of Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Christ and His Mission

An examination of the sermons of Peter Chrysologus helps us to see Christ as the bishop of Ravenna saw Him and spoke of Him. His ideas help us to see the Person of Christ and His mission among men and thus to understand better the gift of divine adoption which He brought us.

Jesus Christ

For St. Peter Chrysologus, the names of Jesus and Christ express in a special and fitting way the union of natures and the mission of the Incarnate Son of God. This is in accord with Tradition which has always seen these names as symbolic of the Word and His mission among men. The name

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<sup>27</sup>Sermon 75 (PL 52, 413): "Christus homo passus, mortuus et sepultus fuit, est, vivit, regnat, manet, permanet Deus."

<sup>28</sup>Sermon 162 (PL 52, 626): "Nam cum esset et solus Dei haeres, et Filius unicus per naturam, te participem sibi, te cohaeredem sibi voluit et fecit esse per gratiam, qui eras miser et subjectus ultimae servituti."

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Jesus is the name given by the angelic messenger at the time of the Annunciation. "And behold, thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High."<sup>29</sup>

St. Peter tells his flock that the name Jesus was given to Him because it signifies and represents the Lord's mission, His work, and His office more completely than any other name. Jesus is a name expressing a sacrament, a hidden meaning in the divine order. He assumed this name from the act of redeeming the world, since He brought salvation and life to the world which had lost it. The meaning of Jesus in the Hebrew is shown by the word Saviour in Latin.<sup>30</sup> He is called Jesus because He has brought salvation to sinful mankind.<sup>31</sup>

It is this name which gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the power to walk to the lame, speech to the dumb, and life to the dead. The power of this name puts to flight the influence of the evil spirit over the bodies of the possessed. For this name represents the majesty of the divinity. "And if His name is so great, how great is its power."<sup>32</sup> By

<sup>29</sup>Luke 1:31-32.

<sup>30</sup>Sermon 60 (PL 52, 367): "Et in Christum Jesum Filium ejus. Illud sacramenti nomen est, hoc triumphi: nam sicut a Deo unctus nomen sortitur ex unguine, ita cum salutem perditam mundo reddidit, a salvando nomen salvatoris assumit. Saepe jam diximus, quod Jesus Haebraica lingua dicitur, Salvator dicitur hoc Latina."

<sup>31</sup>Sermon 61; FC v. 17, p. 113.

<sup>32</sup>Sermon 144 (PL 52, 586): "Et si nomen tantum est, quanta potestas."

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His name, Christ can do all things. He chose that name to manifest His love for mankind. "Jesus, that is, Saviour, is truly called salvation, because He both gave existence to things, and He gave salvation to them when they were perishing."<sup>33</sup>

The name Jesus signifies His mission as Saviour of the world, but it does not signify His inner being or sanctity. The name Christ, the Anointed One, does this. Being anointed by God, He assumes the name Christ from the anointing itself.<sup>34</sup> Christ is so named from a heavenly anointing, for He is permeated with all the fullness of divinity.<sup>35</sup> The union of divinity and humanity in our Saviour conferred on that human nature a unique holiness, the result of the substantial union of the humanity with the Word of God. This union brings a consecration to the humanity. The term anointing signifies the ennobling of this humanity to prepare and sustain that nature in its sublime elevation.

The idea of a christening or anointing of the humanity in its union with the Word finds a special place in the teaching of Peter Chrysologus. As a result of this anointing,

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<sup>33</sup>Sermon 59 (PL 52, 363): "Et Jesus quidem, id est salvator, recte dicitur salus, quia et dedit rebus esse, et idem pereuntibus dat salutem."

<sup>34</sup>Sermon 60 (PL 52, 367): "Et in Christum Jesus Filium ejus. Illud sacramenti nomen est, hoc triumphi: nam sicut a Deo unctus nomen sortitus est ex unguine."

<sup>35</sup>Sermon 61; FC v. 17, p. 113.

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man and God are united in the Saviour.<sup>36</sup> Thus the divine ointment of the divinity flowing from the Godhead into the human nature of the Word constitutes not merely a deified man, but the true God-Man.

Peter elaborates on these ideas in another passage in which he says that the Word is called the Christ because it was through an anointing that he poured out the oil of His divinity to heal mankind:

Kings get new titles from their triumphs--multitudinous epithets derived from the names of the conquered nations. Similarly, Christ gets His names from His titles to His distinctions. Because of the chrism of His anointing He was named Christ, who as the loving Physician poured the unguent of divinity into the already withering members of mortal men.<sup>37</sup>

In the name, Jesus Christ, Chrysologus finds a manifestation of the Person of the Word. As Jesus, He is the Salvation of mankind; as Christ, He is the Anointed of God.

The New Adam

Christ came into this world to bring back to mankind the riches of eternal life which had been lost by Adam. Since his downfall every man by the fact of his descent from Adam comes into this world an enemy of God and a child of wrath,

<sup>36</sup>Sermon 60 (PL 52, 367): "Postquam Dei Filius sicut pluvia in vellus toto divinitatis unguento nostram se fudit in carnem, ab unguento nuncupatus est Christus: et hujus nominis exstitit solus auctor, qui sic Deo superfusus est, et infusus, ut homo Deusque esset unus Deus."

<sup>37</sup>Sermon 57; FC v. 17, p. 106.

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bereft of sanctifying grace. But, by a miracle of divine Goodness, deification is offered anew to mankind through the Son of God who deigned to clothe Himself with our humanity.

The contrast between man's pitiful condition after the fall, and his elevation through the coming of the Saviour, is brought out clearly in the sermons of St. Peter mainly because of the vivid picture he draws of the sorry state of the world as a result of the sin of Adam. Commenting on the words of St. Paul "as by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death,"<sup>38</sup> he says: "Oh, what grief I feel! The very man who was a source of all our goods has become the entrance letting in all our evils!"<sup>39</sup>

St. Peter Chrysologus is overwhelmed when he considers the sin of the first Adam and its consequences. Listen to his lamentation:

There is the entrance, brethren! Through a man sin came, and clearly through this sin we are seen to have come under the control of death. O sin, you cruel beast --and a beast not content to vent your fury against the human race from merely one head. We have seen this beast, brethren, devouring with a triple mouth all the highly precious sprouts of the human family. Yes, brethren, with a mouth that is triple: as sin this beast captures, as death it devours, as hell it swallows down.<sup>40</sup>

Peter now expects his audience to be filled with grief over the fall from the original state and expresses his

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<sup>38</sup>Rom. 5:12.

<sup>39</sup>Sermon 111; FC v. 17, p. 175.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

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own grief:

What copious tears we should surely shed over such a parent! How great are the miseries he left us for our inheritance! Not only did he lose the goods conferred on himself, but he left all his descendants at the mercy of such fierce creditors. O bitter and cruel inheritance! Oh, how unfortunate we were! We found no pleasure in getting that inheritance, but could not disclaim ourselves as the heirs!<sup>41</sup>

However, Peter does not dwell on man's loss in Adam, but passes on to reflect on the goodness of Christ who restored man to the state of justice. This thought fills him with joy which he tries to convey to his hearers.

Therefore, brethren, rejoice! Because the sin which by its heavy mass was depressing toward hell has by Christ been taken away and already sunk into hell. And the grace of this second and divine Parent has restored us from this punishment back to life--us whom the fault of our first parent had sentenced to death. Therefore, man could not be saved without Christ, because before His coming the sin of the whole world had an enduring position.<sup>42</sup>

Christ came to this world to bring life and hope to a world burdened with sin and almost despairing of ever again finding favour with God. This role of Christ as the Head of the new race, as the new Adam, is often mentioned by St. Peter Chrysologus. Through Adam the reign of sin began; Christ inaugurated the reign of grace. Adam's offense resulted in the condemnation of all men to death and suffering while the Saviour conferred justification and everlasting life. "Through

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

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the former sin has reigned to promote death; through the latter grace has reigned to serve life."<sup>43</sup> Just as the leaven of death, the fruit of the life of the first man corrupted the whole mass of our human race, so the leaven of the resurrection, brought to us through Christ, has reunited all human flesh in a new life.<sup>44</sup> Christ exists as a fountain of life for all men, to whom Adam was only a source of death and suffering.<sup>45</sup>

In a sermon on the Epiphany, St. Peter speaking of the first Adam and Christ sums up their respective roles:

The first man, Adam, the father of the race, the origin of all posterity, lost by his sin the good of nature, the freedom of his race, and the life of his offspring. Consequently, his unfortunate posterity endured the evil of nature, the slavery of the race, the death of their offspring. Hence it came about that Christ by His birth restored nature, took away death by dying, summoned life back by His resurrection.<sup>46</sup>

Thus the whole life of Christ is seen in the eyes of the bishop of Ravenna as the work of love to satisfy the debt due to God because of the sin of Adam.

<sup>43</sup>Sermon 112; FC v. 17, p. 181.

<sup>44</sup>Sermon 99 (PL 52, 478): "Mulier accepit a Deo fermentum fidei, quae acceperat a diabolo perfidiae fermentum: abscondit in mensuris tribus, hoc est, in tribus hominum temporibus, quod est ab Adam usque ad Noe, a Noe usque ad Moysen, a Moysen usque ad Christum; ut mulier quae corruperat fermentum mortis in Adam tota massam generis humani, fermento resurrectionis totam carnis nostrae massam redintegraret in Christo."

<sup>45</sup>Sermon 63 (PL 52, 378): "et quibus Adam puteus mortis exstitit, his vitae fons Christus existat."

<sup>46</sup>Sermon 156; FC v. 17, p. 266.

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The Mission of Christ as presented by St. Peter Chrysologus

St. Peter presents the mission of Christ in several different ways by the use of figures. In a single sentence, he describes Christ as being all things to man: king, priest, shepherd, sacrifice, sheep, and a lamb of sacrifice.<sup>47</sup>

On a number of occasions he uses the figure of the shepherd as typifying the purpose of the life work of Christ, is seen from the following passage:

The awesome God later on chose the role of a very gentle shepherd. He assumed this character in order to act as a merciful shepherd and gather together, like straggling sheep into one fold, those wandering peoples, those stray-nations, those tribes scattered far and wide.<sup>48</sup>

He reminds his people that Scripture often states "that the Shepherd has come from heaven with His divine call, to summon back . . . the sheep who were wandering."<sup>49</sup>

Chrysologus emphasizes the redeeming work of Christ by his teaching of the parable of the Good Shepherd. In order to find and save the lost sheep, He becomes incarnate; then after the sheep has been found, He rejoices exceedingly. Christ is the heavenly Shepherd who left the riches of heaven to search for that which was lost. Peter sees in the one sheep that wandered the person of Adam, the head and

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<sup>47</sup>Sermon 23 (PL 52, 264): "Tibi ergo rex, tibi sacerdos, tibi pastor, tibi sacrificium, tibi ovis, tibi Agnus, tibi totum factus est, qui fecerat totum."

<sup>48</sup>Sermon 6; FC v. 17, p. 52.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

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representative of the whole human race. Christ followed the stray sheep and "found him in the womb of the virgin. He came in the flesh of His Nativity, and raising him upon His shoulders, placed him on the cross of His passion, and rejoicing in the complete joy of His resurrection, He carried him into His heavenly mansion."<sup>50</sup>

Christ is not only represented as a Shepherd, but also as a Lamb. He is the Lamb who clothes and feeds men from His own substance. He is sheared as a lamb, willingly and quietly, in order that He might be a cover and protection for all mankind. He has become life and salvation for the world. He is put to death as a lamb for the remission of the sins of the whole world.<sup>51</sup>

Since Christ has come to bring life and health to souls, St. Peter describes His mission in a fitting manner when he calls Christ "the Physician of the world." He came for those whose sick souls need the saving balm of divine grace. He comes for all since all are sick because of the

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<sup>50</sup>Sermon 168 (PL 52, 641): "Hanc ergo Christus veniens quaerere in mundum, in utero virgineae regionis invenit. Venit suae nativitatis in carne, et in crucem levans humeris suae imposuit Passionis, et gaudens toto resurrectionis gaudio per ascensum ad coelestem tulit et pertulit mansionem."

<sup>51</sup>Sermon 23 (PL 52, 264): "Christus ergo sicut ovis, et volens, et tacens tondetur ut tegat illam quam Adam primus intulit nuditatem; velut agnus occiditur, ut peccatum totius mundi immolatus absolvat; ponit pro ovibus animam suam, ut impleat et pietatem pastoris et curam."

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fall of Adam.<sup>52</sup> The solicitude of Christ for those whose salvation He has undertaken is emphasized by Peter when he describes the lengths to which the divine Physician will go in order to fulfill His mission. He restored the life which had been lost; He brought the cure which His love provided. Peter Chrysologus hopes that his flock upon realizing the misery of sin and the happiness of being redeemed by Christ will walk more carefully in the path of virtue and will be more grateful to the Author of life.<sup>53</sup>

Christ's life here on earth is viewed by St. Peter as a continual offering for the salvation of men. All the actions of the life of Christ have eternal significance for their salvation. "Christ always exercised divine virtues through human acts."<sup>54</sup> St. Peter expresses it more vividly in the following: "All the deeds which Christ is reported to have performed while He was in His body on earth are based on historical truth in such a way that they are always found to be replete with heavenly symbols."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup>Sermon 29 (PL 52, 284): "Non necesse habent sani medico, sed male habentes; non enim veni vocare justos, sed peccatores. Et quis non erat aegrotus, ipsa generis humani sic aegrotante natura? Ad omnes ergo venit, qui omnes male habentes ut curaret invenit."

<sup>53</sup>Sermon 131 (PL 52, 560); "Ergo magnificabitur Christus, qui et ante inhabitam vitam dedit, et perditam modo reddit; et homo plus gnarus vitae, erit sibi cautior, erit plus gratus auctori."

<sup>54</sup>Sermon 93; FC v. 17, p. 144.

<sup>55</sup>Sermon 95; FC v. 17, p. 147.

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This is the Christ that is found in the sermons of the bishop of Ravenna. He does not try to fathom the depths of the personality of the God-Man, nor does he burden his audience about speculation over theological problems, but with the submission of deep faith, he contemplates the grandeur and majesty of the Word of God who came to earth to be the Master and Model for the adopted sons of God so that they might attain their full stature in Him, their Elder Brother.

## II. THE INCARNATION

St. Peter on the Incarnation

St. Peter Chrysologus always approaches the great mystery of the Incarnation with great respect and awe at the condescension of God towards man.<sup>56</sup> The union of weak human nature like to our own with the great Power and Love of God is to him a "divine mystery,"<sup>57</sup> a "great sacrament,"<sup>58</sup> and a "miracle of heaven."<sup>59</sup> He likes to contrast the extremes that were united in the God-Man. "Although He was rich, He became poor; although He was rich in His divinity, He became poor in our flesh."<sup>60</sup> It is this mystery that calls forth many of his most eloquent passages on the love of God for mankind. The

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<sup>56</sup>Cf. R.H. McGlynn, The Incarnation in the Sermons of Saint Peter Chrysologus (Mundelein, Illinois: 1956), p. 14.

<sup>57</sup>Sermon 148; FC v. 17, p. 250.

<sup>58</sup>Sermon 141; FC v. 17, p. 230.

<sup>59</sup>Sermon 146; FC v. 17, p. 238.

<sup>60</sup>Sermon 156; FC v. 17, p. 268.

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Incarnation, according to Peter Chrysologus, is an event entirely outside the natural order of things. For this reason St. Peter exhorts his flock to embrace this great mystery with faith,<sup>61</sup> reverence,<sup>62</sup> and with great love.<sup>63</sup>

Some of Peter's most eloquent sermons deal with the mystery of the Incarnation, which is to him such a wondrous event precisely because it is beyond what can be known by reason alone. The Incarnation is an event beyond the power and workings of nature, and can be explained only in the heavenly ordering of things.<sup>64</sup> Is it to be wondered at, then, that the human mind finds itself overcome before such splendour? St. Peter informs his people that as the months of the year draw him closer to another celebration of Our Lord's nativity, he finds himself losing his power of speech when contemplating the tremendous significance of the mystery. "What mind dares to intrude at the very birth of the divine King? Human vision is dulled when the rays of the sun stream down. Then, how can the vision of souls escape all injury when God radiates His light?"<sup>65</sup> Thus, according to Chrysologus, the splendour of the Sun of Justice hinders the function of reason.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup>Sermon 141; FC v. 17, p. 231.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Sermon 147; FC v. 17, p. 245.

<sup>64</sup>Sermon 153 (PL 52, 607): "Ubi nil est terreni usus, est ibi coelestis ordinis totum; quod de mundo non est, mundano intellectui non potest subjacere."

<sup>65</sup>Sermon 146; FC v. 17, p. 238.

<sup>66</sup>McGlynn, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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St. Peter argues that since everything in connection with the Incarnation is the result of a divine plan, it would be futile to discuss these events in ordinary human fashion. According to Peter, all the circumstances of the Incarnation and birth show that human speech is unable to describe in an adequate manner the wondrous designs of God. Such wonders as a heavenly messenger announcing the great mystery and a Virgin giving birth being outside the order of nature can hardly be related in human speech. The holy orator puts it well: "It is more fitting to believe in the ineffable sacrament of the Lord's nativity than to discuss it. . . . Who can attain the secret of God, the birth of the Virgin, the causes of all things, the transaction of eternity, the admirable exchange of divinity and flesh, man and God in one God?"<sup>67</sup>

There is danger, Chrysologus asserts, in attempting to interpret these great truths by human reason, and he warns against judging the events of the Incarnation according to human standards. Such incompetent treating of these sacred mysteries, instead of being conducive to salvation, brings only danger to that salvation and dishonour to the mystery itself.

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<sup>67</sup>Sermon 143 (PL 52, 582): "Ineffabile Nativitatis Dominicae sacramentum credere magis convenit quam referre. . . . Quis attingit arcanum Dei, partum Virginis, rerum causas, saeculorum negotium, commercium divinitatis et carnis, hominem Deumque unum Deum?" Translation above from McGlynn, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

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Therefore, let no one judge in a human way what is done in a divine mystery. Let no one try to penetrate this heavenly mystery by earthly reasoning. Let no one treat this novel secret from his knowledge of everyday occurrences. Let no one employ an example to evaluate what is unique. Let no one manipulate the work of love into an insult, or run the risk of losing salvation.<sup>68</sup>

Is there, then, no way for mankind to come into contact with these eternal truths? Peter reassures his audience that they can do so, but only through the virtue of faith. "We have often said that God is not seen by our corporal eyes, that the divinity is not comprehended by our human mind, that human reason cannot grasp the idea of the Creator of all things; it is faith alone that reaches God."<sup>69</sup> This faith that St. Peter recommends is necessary for all the mysteries and naturally extends to the great mystery of God's love for men, the Incarnation. He repeats this a number of times in his sermons. A good example is the following forceful passage: "Grasp by faith that great mystery of the Lord's birth, because without faith you cannot comprehend even the least of God's works."<sup>70</sup>

But this faith which the bishop of Ravenna considers necessary for acceptance of the divine mysteries, is not merely a blind unreasoned assent. It is an acceptance of truth

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<sup>68</sup>Sermon 148; FC v. 17, p. 250.

<sup>69</sup>Sermon 131 (PL 52, 557): "Saepe diximus quod Deus corporeis oculis non videtur, quod divinitas non clauditur mente carnali, quod humana ratio rerum non capit conditorem, sed Deum sola fides attingit."

<sup>70</sup>Sermon 141; FC v. 17, p. 231.

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because of the infinite wisdom and power of God. Human reason can see many apparent contradictions but it can also see that nothing is more reasonable than that God can do whatsoever He wills. "What is so much according to reason as the fact that God can do whatever He has willed? He who cannot do what he wills is not God."<sup>71</sup> The Incarnation is God's plan. At His command, an angel appeared to Mary, the Holy Spirit descended upon her, she whispered her "fiat", and immediately the heavens announce the glorious event, the stars bear witness to it, the Magi believe and Shepherds adore. Why should not man accept it with the certainty of faith relying on the infinite wisdom of God!<sup>72</sup>

Peter Chrysologus tries to arouse the faith of his hearers by showing to their shame that the animals in the stable are keener in their perception of the wonder of the Nativity than mankind. This is expressed in a charming way in the following passage:

While you loiter, you may be deemed less than those very animals with whom you were previously compared. Look, they give homage with their tails, they manifest their pleasure with their ears, they lick with their tongues, and with whatever sign they can they acknowledge that their Creator, in spite of His nature, has come into yours. Yet, you argue and quibble along with the Jews who turned away from their inns their Master whom the beasts welcomed in their cribs.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

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This faith in the great mystery of the Incarnation must not only be accepted by the mind but should be professed by an act of faith. Such a profession of faith will bring freedom to the children of God. The prophet Isaias wept because his unclean lips kept him from expressing himself when he saw the King of heaven, the Christ.<sup>74</sup> Peter assures his flock that confessing the divinity of Christ will enlighten their hearts, cleanse their mouths and lips, but that denying His majesty would become for them a cause of pollution.<sup>75</sup> After the lips of Isaias were cleansed by the live coal, he spoke of the birth of the God-Man from a Virgin mother.<sup>76</sup> St. Peter urges his hearers to acknowledge their misery so that God might send them grace to proclaim their faith in the mystery of the Incarnation. "Thus we may draw not only relish for our lips from the great sweetness of this mystery, but also complete satisfaction for our senses and minds."<sup>77</sup>

Faith in the mystery of the Incarnation is, according to the bishop of Ravenna, to be treasured and guarded because it is the bond between mankind and God. He who confesses his faith in the heavenly sacrament of the birth of Christ will be filled with mystical speech and become eloquent with the eloquence of the mysteries themselves. So the symbol of faith

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<sup>74</sup>Isaias 6:5.

<sup>75</sup>Sermon 57; FC v. 17, p. 104.

<sup>76</sup>Isaias 7:14.

<sup>77</sup>Sermon 57; FC v. 17, p. 105.

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is to be guarded and preserved intact, so that hearts may be prepared for the indissoluble bond between man and God.<sup>78</sup>

In many places in his sermons St. Peter tells of the grandeur and sublimity of the Incarnation pointing out the consequences for mankind. To know and to believe in the Incarnate Son of God is a call to grace and to eternal life. Because of the Incarnation, men are incorporated into the divine mysteries, human nature has been joined to God, men have been made children of God. The contemplation of all this should fill mankind with a sense of holy awe, with a profound reverence at the unfathomable ways of God.<sup>79</sup>

In his sermons, St. Peter shows some of the reverence which he himself brings to the contemplation of the Incarnate Christ. The reasons for which he feels himself overwhelmed before the crib are many and varied. There is the fact that God, the Creator and Lord of all, takes part in the lowliness of human nature, endures death, is enclosed in a tomb. The reverent attitude of Gabriel at the Annunciation serves as an example to St. Peter of the feelings that men should have before

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<sup>78</sup>Sermon 58 (PL 52, 361): "Hoc est, tu dilata in confessione, et ego illud ipsius confessionis replebo sacramento, et mystico sermone ditabo, et replebo illud toto eloquio celestis arcani. Et revera, Filii, quidquid audientis, quidquid respondentis obedientia profitetur, hoc donantis et docentis Dei redundat ad gloriam. Accepturi ergo symbolum, hoc est, pactum vitae, salutis placitum, et inter vos et Deum fidei insollubile vinculum pectore parate."

<sup>79</sup>Sermon 148; FC v. 17, p. 251.

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the Blessed Virgin and her Child. He pictures the angel as relating the great news of the Incarnation to Mary in a most respectful manner, even with a feeling of awe as he stands in reverent admiration before the future mother of the Word. The fact that mankind is called upon to participate in the mystery of the Lord's birth causes St. Peter to warn his hearers to approach this mystery with the same dispositions as the angel. "And so, brethren, with what reverence, with what trembling it is fitting and appropriate for us to be present at so great a sacrament, when an angel himself did not dispel the fear of his listener without fear."<sup>80</sup>

So great is the reverential awe of Chrysologus at the thought of the Incarnation that the prospect of speaking on this heavenly mystery fills him with doubts as to his ability to do so. "The loftiness of our subject makes us hesitate and delay to speak about the Nativity of Christ. A Virgin gave birth; who can speak? The Word was made flesh; who can relate it? If the Word of God gave forth the cry of an infant, how can an imperfect man hope to speak in words?"<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Sermon 142 (PL 52, 580): "Aestimate, fratres, qua reverentia, quo tremore nos tanto interesse deceat et conveniat sacramento, quando ipse angelus non sine metu metum discutit audientis." Translation from McGlynn, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>81</sup>Sermon 144 (PL 52, 585): "De nativitate Christi nos comperendinare sermonem altitudo rei facit, et cogit mysterii magnitudo. Virgo peperit, quis loquetur? Verbum caro factum est, quis narrabit? Si Verbum Dei infantiae dat vagitum, homo imperfectus quomodo clamabit in verbo?" Cf. McGlynn, p. 21.

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Did the attitude of St. Peter Chrysologus, his great awe at the great mystery of the Incarnation and his warning that entrance to the regal dwelling of the new-born King is not permitted to any unclean person,<sup>82</sup> affect his hearers in such a way that they hesitated to approach the crib? Did they feel unworthy to approach the scene of the birth of the King of Heaven? Did they withdraw because they had not the reverence of angels? Could they make so bold as to go into the presence of Mary in whom rests the entire majesty of the heavenly King and all of His divinity?<sup>83</sup>

It is true that St. Peter had a deep realization of the tremendous majesty of God and was overcome at the stupendous miracle of the Incarnation. However, he takes care to inform his listeners that this sense of the greatness of God and feelings of awe before the crib of the Christ-Child should not lead to the conclusion that Christ does not invite one and all to come and adore Him. Despite the unworthiness of men, Christ came to unite all men to Himself. He did not wish the splendour of His majesty to keep men at a distance from Him. There is no place for fear in the life of a follower of Christ. "A man cannot love who has too great a fear."<sup>84</sup> Our God is not a God of wrath, but a God of love. It was to reawaken

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<sup>82</sup>Sermon 141; FC v. 17, p. 230.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Sermon 147; FC v. 17, p. 244. Cf. p. 20 of this thesis, footnote 14.

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this love and the truth of His care for all His creatures that Christ came to earth.

When the flame of divine love enkindles human hearts, they want to see God with their bodily eyes.<sup>85</sup> That is why the saints deemed everything they merited of little value if they should not see the Lord.<sup>86</sup> For St. Peter Chrysologus, the answer to the desire of men to see God is found in the Incarnation. God knew how much men desired to see Him and chose this way to make Himself visible to mankind. The means He chose was to be great to the dwellers of earth and yet by no means small to the dwellers of heaven. As man, God finds the perfect way to show Himself to those He loves on earth. If God has assumed an angelic nature, He would still be invisible. If He had assumed the form of some creature less than man, He would have suffered an insult to His divinity, and He would have depressed, not elevated, man.<sup>87</sup>

The Incarnation, then, is the result of God's love for mankind. Therefore, there is no reason for any hesitation on the part of any one to approach the God-Man with love and gratitude. It is love which Christ wishes in return for all He has given to mankind and the invitation to return love to the Word Incarnate is given to all men, since Christ came not

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

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for one, or to one, but to all and for all that He might reunite all men into one.<sup>88</sup>

Through the study of his approach towards the mystery of the Incarnation it has been seen that St. Peter Chrysologus took great care to impress on the people of Ravenna an attitude of reverent awe towards this sublime mystery. It was his great love which he bore towards his flock as their pastor that urged him to speak so earnestly on this subject. "You are my life," he tells them. "You are my saving encouragement, and my glory. Therefore, I cannot bear to have you ignorant of what God has given me to know."<sup>89</sup> He urges them to pray for grace and illumination in contemplation of this mystery. That he encouraged this prayer for light and guidance can be seen from the following passage:

What can a sudden and brief sermon accomplish, which like lightning already vanishes before it gives light to the eyes, nor does it give light to those who see it, but only fear? Pray then, that since we, existing in the flesh, are travelling in the obscurity of the world, and are enduring the time of night, not of day, Christ may illumine us by the light of His word, and with this before us we may enter the obscure passages of the heavenly mystery, and may arrive with a slow step to as much clarity as possible with regard to the divine wisdom; just as those wise men, who realizing the weakness of their mental vision, did not dare to expose themselves to the splendour of the sun, or to the divine brightness,

<sup>88</sup>Sermon 132; FC v. 17, p. 218.

<sup>89</sup>Sermon 147 (PL 52, 594): "Vos mihi vita, vos mihi salus, vos mihi gloria: et ideo non patior nescire vos quod Deus mihi dederit scire." Translation above from FC v. 17, p. 243.

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but obtaining at night the soft light of a star for their more delicate eyes, arrived at the most tender crib of Christ.<sup>90</sup>

The Purpose of the Incarnation

A good sequence to the consideration of St. Peter's attitude towards the Incarnation will be the study of the motives he gives for the descent of God to earth--for this manifestation of divine love for men.

The gifted orator affirms that it was to save sinful man that Christ took flesh and underwent the trials and sufferings of His life on earth. In a sermon on the birth of St. John the Baptist, he tells of Christ's desire to save unhappy human nature. Christ entered the way of human birth with a divine step; the Creator of mankind trod the way of a virginal conception and a virginal birth into this world with an invisible step, so that He might, through His birth and life, liberate that nature which He had assumed from the servitude of death. Once He had purified the source of human life, He

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<sup>90</sup>Sermon 64 (PL 52, 379): "Quid faciet subitus et brevis sermo, qui in modum fulguris, prius quam illustret oculos, jam refugit, nec dat lucem videntibus, sed pavorem? Orate ergo, uti quia in saeculi obscuritate versamur, et in carne positi noctis tempus agimus, non diei, lucernam nobis verbi sui Christus accendat, qua praevia mysterii coelestis ingrediamur obscura, et gradu lento perveniamus ad scientiae divinae quantum possumus claritatem: sicut illi magi, qui mentis suae oculos metientes, non audent splendori solis, aut divinae se committere claritati, sed nocte tenerum stellae lumen tenerioribus oculis assumentes, ad cubile Christi tenerrimum pervenerunt." Translation from McGlynn, op. cit. p. 28.

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would thereby restore the many streams of that nature to their original purity.<sup>91</sup>

"To reveal His unspeakable love"<sup>92</sup> and to draw men to God, He went about the villages of Galilee. He searched for the lost sheep of His Father's flock. He mingled with men; He purified human nature from the stains of sin. And from what motive did He do all this? St. Peter tells us: "He, O man, being God, endures your whole nature--and that for your sake--because He loves you intensely, and has so much benevolence for you."<sup>93</sup>

In a masterful sermon on the Incarnation, the Golden Orator outlines in broad strokes the whole story of the fall of man in Adam and the subsequent redemption through Christ. In a scholarly comparison between the circumstances of the fall and those of redemption, he tries to give His flock an appreciation of the goodness of God as shown in the mystery of the Incarnation. An angel appeared to the virgin Eve to bring about the downfall of man; an angel appeared to the Virgin Mary to raise up fallen mankind. The first angel encouraged

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<sup>91</sup>Sermon 87 (PL 52, 446): "Hinc est quod Dominus conditor ipse naturae viam virginiei conceptus, virginiei partus, invisibili vestigio et ignoto calle pertransit, et iter humani ortus divino gressu ambulat, non humano, ut nascendo ipsam naturam a servitute mortis, cui taliter addicta fuerat, primitus liberaret, et fonte purgato supernam rivulis redderet puritatem."

<sup>92</sup>Sermon 170; FC v. 17, p. 276.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

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disbelief in God and rebellion against His law; the other inspired faith in God's power. Eve believed the false tempter while Mary believed in the all-true God. The result of her acceptance of God's plan for mankind is clearly expressed:

Christ is born to renew our corrupted nature through His birth. He accepted infancy, allowed Himself to be fed; He went through the ages of life to restore the one, perfect, abiding age which He had made. He supports man, that he may be unable to fall now. He made into a heavenly being him whom He had made an earthly one. He vivifies with a divine life man once animated with human life. Thus He raises the whole man toward God, to leave in him nothing of sin, or of death, or of labour, or of suffering, or of earth.<sup>94</sup>

The purpose of the Incarnation might be summed up by stating that God became man and dwelt among men to renew the nature which He had created. The need for His descent to earth arose because those things that He had created for life and eternal happiness had brought about suffering and death. The sin of the first man inflicted a deadly wound on human nature and dried up the source of life which had been established by God. Christ healed the wound and imparted new life to men.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>94</sup>Sermon 148; FC v. 17, p. 251.

<sup>95</sup>Sermon 143 (PL 52, 585): "Quae nascendi necessitas Deo cui suppetit faciendi potestas? Quae? Ut ipsam naturam nascendo reficeret, quam fecerat operando: quia quae facta fuerat ut generat ad vitam, ipsa generabat ad mortem. Per peccatum primi hominis natura lethale vulnus accepit, et coepit esse origo mortis, quae erat initium vitae. Hoc ergo negotium nativitatis quod nasci compulit Christum, ut naturae curam nativitas daret auctoris, et naturae curatio esset vivificatio filiorum."

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The Saviour came to be all things to all men, to share their trials, their sufferings, their life, everything except sin. But He did more. He imparted to all the example and gift of His virtues, He bestowed blessing. He taught men how to accept injuries, and how to endure suffering. All this Christ did so that as a Physician He might understand by experience the infirmities of mankind "because a doctor who does not bear infirmities cannot know how to cure them; and he who was not sick with the sick man, cannot confer health on the man who is sick."<sup>96</sup> He bore all the infirmities and sufferings which are the lot of mankind to prove that all things can be transformed by the love of Christ. In the same sermon Peter emphasized that Christ underwent all this propter nos, the very words of the Council of Nicea.<sup>97</sup> The mission of Christ, then, is a mission of mercy to take away sin and the other evils that afflict men through His life of perfect charity.

The purpose of the Incarnation is expressed in another way by St. Peter Chrysologus when he says that "God loaned Christ to the earth in order that He might conquer the devil."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Sermon 50 (PL 52, 340): "Christus venit suscipere infirmitates nostras, et suas nobis conferre virtutes humana quaerere, praestare divina, accipere injurias, reddere dignitates, ferre taedia, referre sanitates; quia medicus qui non fert infirmitates, infirmitates curare nescit; et qui non fuerit cum infirmo infirmo non potest conferre sanitatem."

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.: "Creator rerum, orbis Dominus, posteaquam se propter nos nostra angustiavit in carne, coepit habere humanam patriam."<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup>Sermon 70; FC v. 17, p. 123.

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The whole life of Christ is in direct opposition to the works of the devil whom He came to vanquish. Mankind is powerless to deliver itself from the author of evil. The devil who once was heavenly by nature is now spiritual wickedness. He is not an "evil one" but "evil" from which everything evil springs.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore, Chrysologus urges: "Let man cry out, let him cry out to God, that we may be freed from so great an evil and no one may conquer save Christ."<sup>100</sup>

In the sermon on the parable of the Prodigal Son, St. Peter emphasizes the redeeming work of Christ and the desire that Christ had in coming to earth to re-establish the order disrupted through the sin of Adam. St. Peter looks on that prodigal son as mankind, which has wasted away its life and eternal happiness in the pursuit of sinful pleasures. Then it returns to God for forgiveness and God, in the person of His Son, restores the world to His favour. The kiss of peace is the descent of the Son of God to the world.<sup>101</sup> The fatted calf which was killed as a sign of the reunion is Christ the Lord, who was put to death for sinners. The love of God and His desire to have all men close to Him is dramatized by Peter when he tells of the father running out to meet his repentant son. So the Heavenly Father runs to meet and welcome back sinful man, but He runs out "in the person of the Son, when He

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 122.  
<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 123.  
<sup>101</sup> Cf. Ps. 84:11.

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descended from heaven through Him, and came to earth."<sup>102</sup>

Just as the father in the parable falls upon the neck of his son for joy over his return, so God embraces man "when through Christ, the whole of the divinity came down and took up its abode in our flesh."<sup>103</sup> God returned to man the best robe, "that which Adam lost, the everlasting glory of immortality."<sup>104</sup> The fatted calf is killed at the command of the father, "because the Christ, God as the Son of God, could not be slain without the command of His Father."<sup>105</sup>

Although the sermons in which Chrysologus interprets the parable of the Prodigal Son are developed very fully, the main thought stands out clearly. It is the mercy and compassion of the Father which has brought Christ to earth. God took pity on the misery of man and sent Christ, the Saviour, to redeem mankind. Through the mercy of God and through the life and death of His Incarnate Son, the wayward son is brought again to the fold of grace and peace.

The Gospel story of the banquet to which Jesus was invited was used by St. Peter to explain the redeeming work of Christ among men. He asks the same question as the Pharisees: "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?"<sup>106</sup> He answers that it is not to be wondered at that Christ eats and

<sup>102</sup>Sermon 5; FC v. 17, p. 49.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 50

<sup>106</sup>Matt. 9:11.

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mingles with sinners, since He wished to be born because of them and was slain for their salvation. Should one be surprised because He sips wine with these men, when He was to pour out His life-blood for them on Calvary? He even took up sin itself lest He lose sinners. As the Judge who imposed the sentence of death on the guilty human race, Christ could have obliterated the debt, but He chose to take the path of suffering and death to pay the debt Himself because this means would do sinners more good. Christ came to call the sick and since the whole race is afflicted, He came to all men to cure the sickness which He found in all men.<sup>107</sup>

In another sermon, Peter sees Christ as the drachma of man's redemption, the coin which procures eternal happiness. The woman searching for the lost coin is the Church which under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit recognizes in the coin the divinity of Christ. The Jews possessed Him but did not realize their treasure because of the darkness around them.

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<sup>107</sup>Sermon 29 (PL 52, 283-284): "Miraris, Judaeae, cur misceatur convivio peccatorum, qui propter peccatores et nasci voluit, et non recusavit occidi: oblatras cur peccatorum vinum bibat, qui pro peccatoribus suum sanguinem fudit. Et si vis posse amplius, suscepit ipse peccatum, ne perderet peccatores; in se sententiam suam iudex retorsit, ut amasse se peccatores proderet magis solvendo debitum quam donando. Sed talibus ipsum Dominum respondisse sufficiat. Non necesse habent sani medico, sed male habentes; non enim veni vocare justos, sed peccatores. Et quis non erat aegrotus, ipsa generis humani sic aegrotante natura? Ad omnes ergo venit, qui omnes male habentes ut curaret invenit."

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The Christian's task is to follow the light and inspiration of the Church and thus to arrive at the object of his search, the coin which is Christ, and having found Him to manifest Him to the Gentiles.<sup>108</sup>

Christ came to be the Way, the Truth and the Life.<sup>109</sup> Christ is the Way; He is the road back to God. He became the Way so that the power of the demons could not affect those coming to God through the Way, which is God Himself. No one can come to God save through God.<sup>110</sup> He came not to destroy life and the pleasures of the world but to put to rout the forces of death which have enslaved man; He came to call the world back to His camp, not to do away with it; He came to destroy vice, not to harm His creatures. He came to show men the one true way back to the Father and through His example and death to make it possible for them to follow Him on that road.<sup>111</sup>

Christ is the Truth. He came to teach divine truths, to select men to continue His work here on earth, to show by

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<sup>108</sup>Sermon 169 (PL 52, 642): "Sed nos lucernam matris Ecclesiae jam sequamur, et ambulantes in lumine Dominici vultus, Christi perveniamus ad drachmam; atque amicas et vicinas, id est, Ecclesias gentium convocemus, ne matrem nostram drachmam suam, nesciant invenisse."

<sup>109</sup>John 14:6.

<sup>110</sup>Sermon 16 (PL 52, 240): "Christus factus est via. . . . Ut ad viam per viam, ad Deum per Deum venientibus obistere vis daemonum non valeret: ad Deum nisi per Deum potest perveniri."

<sup>111</sup>Sermon 66 (PL 52, 390): "Christus venit non vitam fugare, sed mortem; mortem fugare, non vitam; mundum revocare, non tollere; vitia perdere, non suam disperdere creaturam."

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His own life, the most perfect life ever lived, how men can live their lives in union with God. He came to strengthen men by His example in those matters for which He Himself laid down precepts, to perform those things which He had commanded to be done. His life was to prove the possibility of that life which He proposed to all men, a life which seemed impossible to live. He came also to perfect the knowledge which the world had concerning His divinity, to take away their ignorance. He came to excite the hearts of men to faith through the virtues which His life manifested.<sup>112</sup>

Christ is the Life according to His own words: "I am the Life."<sup>113</sup> St. Peter Chrysologus refers to this when he calls Our Lord the "Life Himself."<sup>114</sup> "When He laid down His life, He did not lose it."<sup>115</sup> He is the everlasting Life of all the faithful. He calls His sheep and leads them "through fields full of death, and a road of death, to life-giving pastures."<sup>116</sup> In this connection, listen to the golden words of St. Peter when speaking of the martyrs: "And who doubts that these slain martyrs will arise, and live, and reign, since

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<sup>112</sup>Sermon 151 (PL 52, 603): "Christus venerat, ut quos praeceptis docuerat, firmaret exemplis, et ipse faceret quae facienda mandaverat; et visu probaret possible, quae impossibile videbantur auditu. Venerat ut mundo notitiam suae deitatis infunderet, et humani generis ignorantiam auferret. Venerat ut pigra mortalium corda ad fidem virtutibus excitaret."

<sup>113</sup>John 14:6.

<sup>114</sup>Sermon 40; FC v. 17, p. 87.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

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Christ Himself, though slain, has arisen, and lives and reigns.<sup>117</sup>

In this chapter led by the eloquent teaching of St. Peter Chrysologus there has been an attempt to study the Person of the adopted son's Elder Brother and the mystery of the Incarnation which is the real basis for divine adoption in Christ. It has been a fruitful search for from the words of the devout and learned Doctor of the Church, there has come a greater understanding of the love of the Son of God "who became the Son of Man in order that men might become sons of God," as the Fathers of the Church so frequently recalled.

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

## CHAPTER V

## THE ADOPTED SON AND HIS SANCTIFIER, THE HOLY SPIRIT

The sanctification of the soul in Baptism, although it is, as has already been seen, the work of the whole Trinity, establishes between the baptized soul and the divine Persons certain distinct relationships each with its own special character. The baptized person becomes an adopted son of the Father, a brother of the Son, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

It may be said that the relation to the Holy Spirit has a logical priority to that of the other Persons since it is by the gift of the love of God realized in the coming of the Holy Spirit that man receives a likeness to the Son and so becomes a true son of the Father.<sup>1</sup> This means that the Holy Spirit dwells in the just in a way that does not exclude the other Persons, but which is conformable to His hypostatic character. He is the seal and pledge of union with the Father and the Son, just as in the Trinity He is the seal of the union of the Father and the Son.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>B. Fraigneau-Julien, P.S.S., "Grace and the Divine Indwelling," Theology Digest, 4 (1956), p. 79. In this article the author gives a summary of the theology of grace and of Scheeben's contributions to the doctrine of the indwelling.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## THE ADOPTED SON AND HIS SANCTIFIER, THE HOLY SPIRIT 73

Does St. Peter Chrysologus bring home to his hearers the special role of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the adopted son?

It has been noted that St. Peter often stressed the dignity of the Christian as an adopted son of God. He frequently shows that this divine adoption is a real communication and sharing in the divine nature. Two clear references already quoted elsewhere may be repeated. In Sermon 67, Peter speaks of "entering into a sharing of the Divinity," and "being changed by a deification."<sup>3</sup> In Sermon 70 are found the significant words: "He raised the nature of flesh into one divine."<sup>4</sup> Thus St. Peter shows that grace gives a new relation to God. He speaks of a divine life in man once only animated with human life. But when speaking of divine life in the soul of the baptized person, he does not (as far as this limited survey could discover) emphasize the distinctive role of the Holy Spirit.

However, there can be no doubt as to Peter's belief that the Holy Spirit dwells in the souls of the just as can be seen in the following forceful passage: "We are set free by the grace of Christ from the Law of death, and we receive within ourselves the Holy Spirit as warrior and victor over vices."<sup>5</sup> (Italics mine.)

<sup>3</sup> Sermon 67; FC v. 17, p. 115.  
<sup>4</sup> Sermon 70; FC v. 17, p. 119.  
<sup>5</sup> Sermon 115; FC v. 17, p. 193.

## THE ADOPTED SON AND HIS SANCTIFIER, THE HOLY SPIRIT 74

When explaining the words of the Creed "Who was born of the Holy Spirit," St. Peter refers to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity as the life-giving principle of the new Christian who is brought "to the new birth of life"<sup>6</sup> through the Holy Spirit. In another passage the same idea is expressed when he speaks of those "who have been reborn to the likeness of Our Lord,"<sup>7</sup> and "enlivened by the Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup>

These few but convincing references to the Holy Spirit in the sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus help to strengthen the realization that at Baptism the newly adopted son of God becomes the temple or property of the Holy Spirit and must, therefore, walk according to that Spirit. "A man cannot belong to Christ unless he has the Spirit of Christ."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Sermon 57; FC v. 17, p. 107.

<sup>7,8</sup>Sermon 117; FC v. 17, p. 201

<sup>9</sup>Rom. 8:9.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE ADOPTED SON AND HIS HEAVENLY MOTHER

After considering along with St. Peter Chrysologus the dignity of the adopted son of God and his special relationship with each Person of the Blessed Trinity, it is fitting to study at least briefly the relationship of the son of God with his heavenly Mother. In his sermon on the Annunciation, Peter states succinctly: "Womankind has become truly the mother of those who live through grace."<sup>1</sup>

Mary, in freely consenting to the Incarnation of the Redeemer cooperated with Christ in bringing salvation to men. Peter Chrysologus shows that at the time of the Annunciation the privilege of cooperating in the redemption of mankind was offered to Mary, and that Mary freely consented to the responsibility. In the words: "Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee,"<sup>2</sup> St. Peter sees the offering made to Mary. "This salutation contains a giving, a giving of a present, and not merely an expression of greeting."<sup>3</sup> When Mary gave her assent to the Incarnation she assumed the duty of cooperating to bring back salvation to the world.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sermon 140; FC v. 17, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 1:26-29.

<sup>3</sup>Sermon 140; FC v. 17, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup>Sermon 143 (PL 52, 583): "Ave, gratia plena. Haec est gratia quae dedit coelis gloriam, terris Deum, fidem gentibus, finem vitiiis, vitae ordinem, moribus disciplinam. Hanc gratiam detulit angelus, accepit Virgo salutem saeculis redditura."

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By means of a comparison between Eve and Mary, Peter shows their different functions with regard to the human race. Eve drew Adam to sin and thus made him the author of man's ruin; Mary by her willing and efficacious union with Christ brought Him to earth and gave Him to mankind as the Author of new life. "Because of this Christ wished to be born, so that just as through Eve death came to all, so also through Mary might life return to all."<sup>5</sup>

The exalted position of Mary in God's plan for the salvation of men is shown by Chrysologus when he meditates on the name she bears. The dignity of the Virgin is implied in her name, for the Hebrew word for Mary translated into Latin means Domina or Lady. The angel, therefore, calls her Lady, so that all servile fear might leave the Lord's Mother, who because of her high rank and the authority of her office has been given the right to be called Lady.<sup>6</sup>

In another passage St. Peter tells what the name of Mary indicates of her office both for Christ and for mankind, comparing Mary to Miriam, the sister of Moses, who led her people out of slavery. Referring to the passage in Genesis,

<sup>5</sup>Sermon 99 (PL 52, 479): "Ob hoc namque Christus nasci voluit, ut sicut per Evam venit ad omnes mors, ita per Mariam rediret omnibus vita."

<sup>6</sup>Sermon 142 (PL 52, 579): "Ante causam dignitas virginis annuntiatur ex nomine: nam Maria Hebraeo sermone, Latine, domina nuncupatur: vocat ergo angelus dominam, ut dominatoris genetricem trepidatio deserat servitutis, quam nasci, et vocari dominam ipsa sui germinis fecit et impetravit auctoritas."

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"The gathering together of the waters He called seas,"<sup>7</sup> St. Peter asks: "And when were the seas not a mother?"<sup>8</sup> He then applies this thought to Mary making at the same time the comparison between Mary and the sister of Moses, also called Mary. As Mary, the sister of Moses, led the way through the Red Sea, so the Blessed Mother leads the way for those "whom the water like a mother brought into the light of day."<sup>9</sup>

Peter goes on to explain what the name of Mary signifies: This name is related to prophecy and salutary to those reborn. It is the badge of virginity, the glory of purity, the indication of chastity, the sacrificial gift of God, the height of hospitality, the sum total of sanctity."<sup>10</sup>

This exalted woman who has given birth to the Lord of creation has been endowed by her Divine Son with the fullness of grace. Other human beings possess grace, but Mary possesses the whole plenitude of grace.<sup>11</sup> Mary is singularly blessed among the children of men because of her great privilege.<sup>12</sup>

She who is blessed among women because of the grace which she received in bearing the Lord became also, in that

<sup>7</sup>Gen. 1:10.

<sup>8</sup>Sermon 146; FC v. 17, p. 241. St. Peter uses a play on the words Maria meaning Mary and maria meaning seas.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Sermon 140; FC v. 17, p. 227.

<sup>12</sup>Sermon 142 (PL 52, 579): "Invenisti gratiam. Apud quem? Apud Deum. Beata quae inter homines audire sola meruit prae omnibus."

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very act of submission to God, the mother of all those who are to regain life in Christ. Commenting on the words "blessed art thou among women,"<sup>13</sup> Chrysologus says:

Mary through the blessing she received, rejoices, is honored, is exalted. Now, too, womankind has become truly the mother of those who live through grace, just as previously she was the mother of those who by nature are subject to death.<sup>14</sup>

"The soul does not live without Christ."<sup>15</sup> But it was Mary, full of grace, who bestowed upon the Word of God His earthly life, bearing in her womb Him whom she had conceived of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Mary is the mother of those who live in Christ. Once again, St. Peter compares Eve and Mary. Eve was "the mother of all the living."<sup>16</sup> But, by the sin of Adam, Eve became the mother of those who die. Mary, however, became the mother of the living so that fulfillment might be had of the scriptural statement "the mother of all the living."<sup>17</sup>

It was according to the will of Christ, as St. Peter says, that mankind gained such a mother. "For because of this Christ wished to be born, so that, just as death came to all through Eve, so through Mary life might return to all."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Luke 1:42.

<sup>14</sup>Sermon 140; FC v. 17, p. 228.

<sup>15</sup>Sermon 19 (PL 52, 252): "non vivit anima sine Christo."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Gen. 3:20.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Sermon 99 (PL 52, 479): "Ob hoc namque Christus nasci voluit, ut sicut per Evam venit ad omnes mors, ita per Mariam rediret omnibus vita."

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To her have been entrusted the keys of heaven "because without Mary neither death can be put to flight nor life be restored."<sup>19</sup>

St. Peter's teaching about Mary is an eloquent testimony to her share in the work of redemption. This testimony is not gathered in one or more special sermons on Mary, but is found in a number of different sermons on the Incarnation in which Chrysologus stresses the idea of Mary as the mother of all men and as mother in a special way of "those who live through grace."<sup>20</sup> The maternity of Mary and the divine filiation which is brought about by Baptism establish the bond between the adopted son and his heavenly Mother.

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<sup>19</sup>Sermon 64 (PL 52, 380): "quia sine Maria nec fugari mors poterat, nec vita poterat reparari."

<sup>20</sup>Sermon 140; FC v. 17, p. 228.

## CONCLUSION

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This research into the sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus with the purpose of studying his teachings on the doctrine of supernatural adoption was initiated and influenced by the distinguished theologian, Matthias Joseph Scheeben, who used St. Peter to clarify and strengthen his own explanation of this doctrine.

Careful scrutiny of a fair sampling of St. Peter's sermons proved that the hope of finding valuable explanation of this doctrine was not without good foundation. Not only did Peter teach the doctrine of supernatural adoption thoroughly, but he seemed impressed with the importance of this doctrine for a vital living of Christianity. The reading and rereading of his inspired sermons brought to light many significant references to this doctrine, the key doctrine of Christianity.

The final paragraph of Scheeben's treatise on the Blessed Trinity in his Dogmatik provides a fitting conclusion to this thesis. It will show how supernatural adoption fits into the whole economy of salvation, with special reference to the Blessed Trinity. It will also show that Scheeben found in a sentence from St. Peter Chrysologus a concise summing up of all he wanted to say about adoption and the Blessed Trinity.

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From this it follows that the triune God is the God of the life of grace, and that a full and perfect development of the life of grace is impossible without the knowledge of the Trinity. Hence in the New Testament where the life of grace first appears in its fulness, the relations of man to God and man's communication with God are always attributed to one or other of the Divine Persons. For the same reason, the naming of the Three Persons is as essential in the Sacrament of regeneration and adoption as the faith and confession of the Trinity are the normal condition of its reception. Hence also the Fathers pointed out that the faith of Christians in God the Father transcends reason and opens the way to adoptive sonship. Cf. St. Hilary, De Trinitate 1:10 ss.; St. Peter Chrysologus, Sermo 68, In oratione dominica: "Behold how soon thy profession of faith has been rewarded: as soon as thou hast confessed God to be the Father of His only Son, thou thyself hast been adopted as a son of God the Father."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm and Scannell, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 354. The above is a complete translation of the first paragraph of no. 1095 of Book 2 of Scheeben's Dogmatik.

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## ABSTRACT

Influenced by the respect that the great theologian, Matthias Joseph Scheeben, had for St. Peter Chrysologus as a teacher of divine adoption, this thesis has as its purpose to study the doctrine of divine adoption as presented in typical sermons of this Doctor of the Church. The following paragraphs summarize the results of the research.

The miracle of divine adoption takes place at Baptism in which sacrament the soul having been purified and freed from all punishment due to sin rises with Christ to a new life and becomes a partaker in the divine nature. This wondrous privilege brings with it the responsibility of manifesting the divine virtues by a holy way of life. Through union with Christ and the other members of the Church, the adopted son comes at last into the possession of his heritage which is to live in glory with Christ and to reign with Him eternally. (Chapter Two.)

Through Baptism man is made partaker of the divine nature and is taken into the very family of God. He becomes a son of the Heavenly Father, a brother of God the Son, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

It would be an inadequate conception to say that God is the provident Father of all His creatures, and that He has a special care for the human race. Chrysologus is careful not to stop there but he shows the special relationship between

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the soul in sanctifying grace and God the Father. In many passages, but especially in his sermons on the Prodigal Son, Peter tells his flock of the Father's great love for His children. He points out His generosity, His mercy, His total forgiveness and produces as the greatest proof of the Father's love His sending of His own beloved Son to be the Elder Brother and Exemplar of all the other sons of God. (Chapter Three.)

The eternal Son of God became man for the salvation of mankind, to bring back to men the riches of eternal life which Adam had lost. He is the Head of the new race; He is the new Adam. The whole life of Christ as seen by the bishop of Ravenna is the work of love to satisfy the debt due to God because of Adam's sin. Christ came to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Christ is the Way to God. He came to teach divine truths and to lead men by precept and example. He is the everlasting Life of all the faithful. (Chapter Four.)

Peter Chrysologus speaks only briefly on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the just. But his teaching, although brief, is clear. The Holy Spirit enters the soul at Baptism as warrior and victor over vices. He raises the nature of flesh into one divine. He dwells in the soul of the just as in a temple. (Chapter Five.)

St. Peter is truly the Golden Orator when speaking of Mary, the Mother of God, who is also "mother of all the living,"

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and in a special way of "those who live by grace." In his sermons there is a clear presentation of the parallel between Eve and Mary, a parallel which was drawn up and explained from the earliest Christian times. (Chapter Six.)

As has been seen, the sermons of St. Peter Chrysologus furnish abundant material for a study of the doctrine of supernatural adoption. This research has proved that he taught this doctrine thoroughly and was impressed with its importance for the dynamic living of the Christian life.