

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

VOLUME 109

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

EDITORIAL BOARD

Thomas P. Halton

The Catholic University of America
Editorial Director

Elizabeth Clark
Duke University

Robert D. Sider
Dickinson College

Joseph T. Lienhard
Fordham University

Michael Slusser
Duquesne University

Frank A. C. Mantello
The Catholic University of America

Cynthia White
The University of Arizona

Kathleen McVey
Princeton Theological Seminary

Robin Darling Young
The University of Notre Dame

David J. McGonagle

Director

The Catholic University of America Press

FORMER EDITORIAL DIRECTORS

Ludwig Schopp, Roy J. Deferrari, Bernard M. Peebles,
Hermigild Dressler, O.F.M.

Joel Kalvesmaki
Staff Editor

ST. PETER
CHRYSOLOGUS
SELECTED SERMONS
VOLUME 2

Translated by

WILLIAM B. PALARDY
St. John's Seminary School of Theology
Brighton, Massachusetts

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
Washington, D.C.

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
LIBRARY
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA 46825

In memory of my mother and father

Copyright © 2004
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standards for Information Science—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48 - 1984.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Peter, Chrysologus, Saint, Archbishop of Ravenna, ca. 400-450.

[Sermons. English. Selections]

St. Peter Chrysologus : selected sermons / translated by William B. Palardy.

p. cm. — (The Fathers of the church, a new translation, v. 109)

Vol. 1 published in 1953, by Fathers of the Church, New York, under title:
Saint Peter Chrysologus : selected sermons; and Saint Valerian : homilies.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8132-0109-8 (alk. paper)

I. Sermons, Latin—Translations into English. I. Title: Saint Peter Chrysologus. II. Title. III. Series: Fathers of the church ; v. 109.

BR60.F3P474 2004

252'.014—dc22

2004004195

SERMON 62

A Seventh on the Creed

ANLESS THE ONE WHO IS DEVOTED to bringing up children regresses to childhood in every way, he never leads the child to mature adulthood. For this reason at such a moment, he softens his voice, he emphasizes his words, he nods and gestures, he suspends his judgment, he changes his diet, he reduces his strength, he neglects to exercise, he slows his pace, he strives not to walk but to crawl; he pretends to laugh, he feigns fear, he sheds false tears, because in his case to lie shows his dedication, to have acted foolishly indicates his prudence, and his weakness is his strength. I think that blessed Paul did this when he says: "I have become a little child in your midst, just like a nurse fondling her children."¹

But perhaps someone may be amazed at seeing someone involved with child-rearing doing such things: he does not laugh if he is a parent; if he is a father he is not surprised; whoever knows how to love cannot call this foolishness. And so you who are already fathers, already strong, and already prudent, I beg you to put up with the duty I must discharge of rearing the little ones of my Lord, and with my uttering of words today that are more suitable for coaxing than for imparting knowledge; allow me not to be robust in my remarks, but to water them down,² and to have them flow like milk for their still-delicate throats, as the Apostle teaches: "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food":³ to modify my way of speaking, to have a propensity for a variety of emotions, and—what more can I say?—to be con-

1. 1 Thes 2.7.

2. The Latin—*non quadrare, sed liquare sermones*—implies that Chrysologus's preaching on this occasion will not be the usual fare, a good "square meal."

3. 1 Cor 3.2.

sumed in mind, heart, and body with the weak minds of the little ones.⁴

2. But now I urge you, dear offspring of the Church, in the words of the prophet: "Come, my children, listen to me."⁵ Rather, listen through me, and through my voice listen to the commands of your true Father, because God is calling you by means of my mouth. "Come, my children." To where do you come? For what purpose? "I shall teach you," he says, "the fear of the Lord."⁶ And who would come to that fear? The one "who wants life"; the one who "desires to see good days";⁷ the one who wants to do good and to flee evil; the one who desires to possess the quiet of divine peace after the struggle between flesh and spirit.

"Come, my children, listen to me: I shall teach you," he says, "the fear of the Lord. Who is the person who wants life and desires to see good days? Restrain your tongue from evil, and do not let your lips speak any deceit."⁸ Just as a guilty conscience corrupts the flesh, so does deceit pollute the lips, curses defile the tongue; and consequently one who is impure⁹ in lips and tongue is unable to make profession before God. And since "faith in the heart leads to justification, confession with the mouth to salvation,"¹⁰ sanctify your hearts, cleanse your lips, make your tongue upright, so that your voice, which conveys your faith, may proceed from a pure heart in a complete manifestation of sanctity.

3. Make the sign of the cross!¹¹ We are taught that even in a human contract a pledge¹² or a pact,¹³ which contains hopes for immediate or future gain, is called a symbol;¹⁴ nevertheless, duplicate documents always confirm that symbol between the two parties, and human wariness makes a person cautious in such

4. That is, his audience includes both longstanding Christians and candidates for baptism. See F. Sottocornola, *L'anno liturgico*, 140.

5. Ps 33.12 LXX; Ps 34.11.

6. Ibid.

7. Ps 33.13 LXX; Ps 34.12.

8. Ps 33.12–14 LXX; Ps 34.11–13.

9. Reading the variant *inquinatus* for *dilatatus* in Olivar's CCL text.

10. Rom 10.10.

11. See Sermon 56.5 and n. 15.

12. See Sermon 58.2 and n. 6.

13. See Sermon 58.2 and n. 5.

14. On *symbolum* as the word for the "Creed," see Sermon 56, n. 1.

agreements so that treachery, always the enemy of contracts, may not sneak up on him and cheat him. But this is the case between human beings, among whom fraud does damage, either by whom it is done or to whom it is done.

But between God and human beings the symbol of faith is confirmed by faith alone; it is entrusted not to the letter, but to the spirit; it is entrusted and committed to the heart, not to a sheet of paper,¹⁵ since divine credit has no need of any human warranty. God does not know how to commit fraud and is incapable of suffering it, since he is not hindered by time, nor restrained by age, nor deceived by anything concealed; he sees what is hidden, he retains what is stolen, and he possesses what is refused him. For God his account is always solvent, since there is nowhere for what he has entrusted to another to be lost. And the following is the case for the human being, not for God: it is lost for the one who rejects it, but it is not lost for the one who lends it.

But you say: "Why is it that the One who is unable to be deceived demands a pledge? Why does he want a symbol?" He wants it for your sake, not for his; not because he has any hesitations, but so that you might believe. He wants a symbol, since the One who entered into your death does not disdain entering into a contract with you. He wants a symbol, because whoever is always lending everything wants to be in debt himself. He wants a symbol, because now he is calling you, not to the reality, but to faith; and through the present pledge he entices and invites you to future gain. The Apostle reminds us of this when he says: "From faith to faith."¹⁶ And elsewhere: "The just one lives by faith."¹⁷

4. Therefore, let no one be unmindful of the symbol or forgetful of the agreement he has entered into with God and demand the reality when he has only now taken up faith; let no one when he has just begun to hope complain because he has not yet received what he has hoped for. Listen to the Apostle as

¹⁵. See *Sermon 56.5* and n. 17.

¹⁶. Rom 1.17.

¹⁷. Ibid., Hab 2.4, Gal 3.11, and Heb 10.38.

he says: "By hope you were saved; hope that is seen is not hope. For why hope for what one can see? We hope, however, for what we do not see, and we await it with patience."¹⁸ Hope aims for the future, faith is the means to what is promised: when the reality comes, and what is promised arrives, hope ends, and faith ceases.

A letter is sweet, but only until the one who sent it comes in person. A bond¹⁹ is necessary, but only until the debt is paid off. Flowers are pleasant, but only until the fruit grows. But the writer's presence puts an end to the letter, payment wipes out the promissory note, flowers are destroyed by the fruit; and so by faith you will recognize that you have been marked out now as an offspring of your heavenly Father, an heir of God, a co-heir of Christ,²⁰ a sharer in the heavenly kingdom, one who professes the divine Judge, a resident of heaven, a possessor of paradise; you will recognize that you have been promoted now with hope, not with the reality.

And so receive faith, hold fast to hope, learn the Symbol, so that you may be able to attain to the reality and those good things that we mentioned earlier. Make the sign of the cross! Today, O man, your soul has been brought back to God.

5. *I believe in God.* Your soul, which for a long time earlier was addressing God, but did not know it; which was calling upon God, but was unaware of it—it certainly was unaware of him whom it was so eagerly seeking through stones and wood—therefore, let it now say, let it say: *I believe in God the Almighty Father.* For the long time when it used to look upon rocks, it did not see the One in whom to place its trust. And he is truly God who granted you to see by not seeing, while the pagan gods, by contrast, had made you not see by seeing. Listen to the Lord as he says: "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who see might become blind."²¹

¹⁸ Rom 8.24–25.

¹⁹ See Col 2.14 and Rufinus of Aquileia, *Expositio Symboli* 13 (CCL 20.150).

²⁰ See Rom 8.17.

²¹ Jn 9.39.

6. *I believe in God the Father.* There is devotion in God, there is always affection in God, Fatherhood abides permanently with him. So believe that there was always a Son, lest you blaspheme that there was not always a Father. But you say: "If he begot, how did he always have [the Son]? If he always had him, how did he beget him?" You who ask such questions deny the faith that you profess. *I believe*, is what you said: if you believe, where does that "how" come from? "How" is the word of one who doubts, not of one who believes.

I believe, you said, *in God the Father Almighty*. If there is something he cannot do, he is not almighty. But you suppose that he begot his Son from something else, since you profess that he made everything from nothing; it certainly would have been from something else, if it had been a temporal action. But if the Father is not subject to time, the Son knows no beginning. But what a travesty it is that you make him temporal who has seen fit to make you eternal. Therefore, the Father begets the Son for us, not by a conception within time, nor by fleshly passion, but insofar as he reveals it.

7. *And in Christ Jesus his Son, our only Lord.* Be aware with what reverence the faith is taught and handed on to you: you hear the Father in order to recognize, understand, and believe in, but not to dispute about, the Son; and so, profess that he is, but do not be so reckless and inquisitive as to investigate from where and when and how he is. This is why immediately after this heavenly discourse proclaims the Father to you, it refers you with good reason to Christ, to Jesus, to the Son, to our only Lord, so that when you see that you are unable to comprehend, evaluate, and grasp his human dimension you do not dare to intrude upon his divine dimension.

8. *I believe in God the Father Almighty. And in Christ Jesus his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.* Come, O man, if you are a man after all; advance with your heart, ascend with your mind, expand your understanding, master the extent of your talents, arouse the vigor of your knowledge, activate all of your reasoning capacity, examine, dispute, scrutinize, and then to the world's amazement explain all by yourself how the Spirit begets, the Virgin conceives, bears,

and remains a Virgin after giving birth;²² how the Word becomes flesh, how God becomes Man, how man is brought into union with God; how a cradle contains him whom heaven does not contain; how the One who sustains the whole world is carried on people's shoulders; why he, who made all things, established the universe, and keeps everything in order, willed to be born from you and to be ruled by you, and ordained that he be brought up, so that he would live with you as his parent, after he had earlier noted your servile condition.

And if out of the recesses of divinity you will have been able to attain to this and speak about the mystery of God, then go deeper, ascend higher, be more bold in your gaze. And then as a new explorer, as a unique discoverer, and as a revealer of divinity make plain the times of the Father, the origins of the Son. Be greater than Isaiah, who said: "Just as a sheep was led to slaughter, and as a lamb that was silent before its shearer, so too he did not open his mouth in his lowliness. He was taken away in condemnation; who will describe his generation?"²³ Whose generation? His, who like a sheep was led to the slaughter.

Whether it is Christ's human generation, or whether it is his divine one, both generations are indescribable, so what surge of water, O man, what tidal wave has brought you to such a shipwreck? What wind has propelled you to fly through the air to your ruin? The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one deity, one power, one eternity, one majesty. But whatever inferiority the Son has, whatever he receives, whatever he does not know, comes from my body, not from his substance. Or are you surprised, O man, that he invokes his Father in heaven while deeming it fitting to have a mother on earth?

22. For another reference to the three phases of Mary's virginity in a catechesis on the Creed, see Augustine, *The Creed* 3.6 (FOTC 27.294–95). On the sources and background for the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity, see David Hunter, "Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 47–71. See also Chrysologus's *Sermon* 148a.3.

23. Is 53.7–8 LXX. Is 53.8 was a popular prooftext for theologians from all sides of the Trinitarian controversies in the fourth century. See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988), 833 and n. 55. See also Augustine, *Sermon* 215.3 (FOTC 38.144–45).

9. *Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried.* Why, O man, do you find fault with him, who in himself is equal to the Father, for the sole reason that he willed to be inferior in you?²⁴ You hear that he stands while Pontius Pilate is seated, that he is judged while Pilate interrogates him. Why then do you accept only that he is delivered over to slanderous accusers and condemned by a guilty judge? But it was also his will to be born from your flesh, his will to cling to your breasts, to lie on your chest, and his will to be carried on your shoulders, since it was always his will to be loved and not to be feared by you.²⁵

Look at what was his first command in the Law, and then you will see what he has desired with respect to grace. As the evangelist has told us, after the Lord had been asked what was the first commandment in the Law, he said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."²⁶ This is why he came to your heart, he came to your mind, and he took on your soul, because from the beginning he wanted to be loved by you with your intellect, your heart, and your body—he *who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried.*

10. Up to this point the Jew follows, and the heretic²⁷ lies in wait: but let no one go along with their opinion on the last statement, since they are fed and fattened on the injuries inflicted on Christ. But you, my little children, listen, so that after the sadness of the passion, death, and burial, you may glow with the joy of the resurrection. *On the third day he rose:* so that the resurrection of our body might be the power, grace, and favor of the Trinity.

11. *He ascended into heaven:* in me, since in himself he was never absent from heaven.²⁸

24. This "inferiority in you" is a reference to "your" human nature that Christ assumed in the Incarnation.

25. See Olivar, *Los sermones*, 361–62, for other references in Chrysologus's sermons to the notion that God wants to be loved rather than feared.

26. Mk 12:30.

27. The heretic in question is probably an Arian who, in Chrysologus's view, is intent upon diminishing the Son's divinity.

28. See *Sermon* 58.8, n. 16.

12. *He is seated at the right hand of the Father:* according to the order of divine power, not of human honor. We have said: the Son is seated at the right hand in such a way that the Father is never seated on the left.²⁹

13. *To judge the living and the dead.* And how can death pay what is owed to the Judge? This is the reason why one rises, so that he must pay what is owed.

14. *I believe in the Holy Spirit.* The one who denies the Holy Spirit denies the One in whom he has believed.

15. *In the holy Church:* because the Church is in Christ, and Christ is in the Church. The one who confesses the Church³⁰ has professed that he has believed in the Church.

16. *In the forgiveness of sins.* Give yourself, O man, pardon by believing, since you fell into all the sins by despairing. *In the forgiveness of sins.*

17. *The resurrection of the flesh.* This is the complete manifestation of faith, if you should believe that the flesh, which has broken down, has become putrefied, and has decomposed, can rise, can be restored, and can return through the action of God, whom you swore could do all things just then when you professed that he is Almighty.

18. *Eternal life.* It was right to add *eternal life* so that one would believe that he would rise.

29. See *Sermon 58.9* and n. 17.

30. Following the manuscripts that omit the preposition *in* before *ecclesiam*.