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The Role of the Chrysostom Exegesis of the New Testament in Shaping the Christology, the Ecclesiology, the Mysteriology and the Soteriology of the Eastern Church

Abstract of the Ph. D. Thesis

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At the initiative of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church has approved the year 2015 to be declared *The Anniversary Year of the mission of the monastery and the parish today* and *The Commemorative Year of St. John Chrysostom* and of the great shepherds of souls in the dioceses. It was decided that the matter be dealt with in the dioceses and the theological educational institutions of the Romanian Orthodox Church through theological debates, colloquiums, seminars, symposiums, conferences etc. with the purpose of presenting the history, the life and the work of the parish in the past and today, as well as some renowned clerics, who through the ministry and their work helped to support, strengthen and invigorate the life and the mission of the parish.

This tendency towards St. John Chrysostom's contribution of maintaining the Christian communities of Eastern in doctrinal, cultic and organizational unity has determined also the choice of the theme of this PhD thesis, conceived under the close guidance of His Holiness Teodosie Petrescu. I wanted to analyse what was the role of the New Testament in shaping the Christology, the ecclesiology, the Misteriology, and the Soteriology of the Eastern Church. The vast material that had to be studied and which is reflected in the large number of pages of this work made me understand better and I hope that it will make the others understand why this Holy Father has remained a reference name in the Orthodox theology. The answer can be summed up in one sentence: it does not encapsulate the Christian doctrine in prefabricated formulas, but speaks it in a language accessible to the audience.

The second half of the fourth century was a period of turbulence in the Church, and Christianity had to fight in order to impose itself before the competing religions, eager to exercise their influence¹. St. John Chrysostom proved to be the providential man, one of the most prolific and admired Christian preachers of his time who contributed to establishing Christianity as a dominant social structure in the Eastern Roman Empire². He conducted his mission at Antioch, and also at Constantinople, and he was constantly concerned with the spiritual enhancing of his flock, especially when he saw it surrounded by the secular temptations of the city life in the Late Roman Empire. He adapted his preach to fight against these temptations and encouraged the community to live a genuine Orthodox life.

¹ P. Allen, W. Mayer, *John Chrysostom*, Routledge, 1999.

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A. M. Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City*, Duckworth, 2004.

St. John Chrysostom continues to be one of the most loved and respected Fathers of the Orthodox Christian tradition. The renowned specialist in patrology Johannes Quasten writes: "Of the Holy Greek Fathers, no one has left us a literary heritage as rich as St. John Chrysostom (...) None of the Eastern ecclesiastical writers has reached such a high level of love and admiration from the part of the posterity as St. John Chrysostom "³.

If you were to find three qualities of St. John who imposed him as a leading figure in the consciousness of the Church posterity, they would be: an exceptional ability to explain the Gospel of Christ with passion and words appropriate to the culture of his time; a strong emphasis on the social implications of the Gospel; an effort to make as fruitful as possible the belonging to the Christian community and to transmit the theological reflection in homiletics form.

St. John personality and his work were in the centre of many researchers' concerns. But in the Romanian theology unfortunately, the previous studies were predominantly either biographical or were dealing with problems of theology, but treated distinctly. The PhD thesis that I intend to draw up will lead to a very necessary thematic exploration of the chrysostomian preach, throwing light on both the method of interpreting the neo-testamentary text and on some doctrinal statements that will make a career in the future theological literature⁴. The methodology used in developing this work consisted, on the one hand, in studying the majority of the Chrysostom works translated into Romanian and, on the other hand, in consulting the original key-texts. From these writings, mostly exegetical homilies, essays and letters, I tried to extract the theological conceptions of St. John regarding the topics proposed for analysis: Christology, Soteriology, ecclesiology and Misteriology, and to systematize them in a logical framework, placing them in the context of all his thought and his biography specificity. I did not want to distract the reader's attention from the primary sources, to give St. John the occasion to speak "live", if one may say so, rarely resorting to secondary sources. Exposure to par in some of my statements there are references to renowned authors from the Patrology, whose view is a landmark in the specialty literature.

Some quotes include terms used in the original Greek, to facilitate a more accurate understanding of the intentions of the great exegete and for the reader to benefit from a more nuanced understanding of the substrate of the corresponding texts.

The doctoral thesis contains seven chapters. The first one is dedicated to the life of the great exegete and presents the most important biographical aspects. At the same time, I have

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J. Quasten, Patrology, vol. III, Westminster, Maryland, 1984, p. 429.

⁴ M. Simonetti-E. Prinzivalli, *Storia della letteratura cristiana antica*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2010, p. 257- 429.

included in this chapter the concerns of the Romanian theologians, especially of biblical scholars on the topic that is the subject of our research.

To understand well enough St. John's homiletical contribution, I've found it necessary to penetrate the mysteries of the sites that are linked, mainly, to his activity. This great exegete began his ecclesiastical mission and lived the most part of his life in Antioch. The subchapter "Christianity in Antioch" presents the Antiochenes' religiosity. The cult of martyrs, which increased rapidly in the era of St. John Chrysostom, was a cult that suited the mood and exuberance of residents from Antioch around the major holidays. During the festivals and holidays dominated by a "pagan" joy, there was a mixture of drunkenness and sins of Dionysian type and the Jews, the Christians and the pagans were celebrating in the same way, forming festive processions in honour of Dionysus. In a city inhabited by pagans, Christians, Hebrews and Manicheans such religious festivals were very frequent. The Antiochenes used to mark the festive moments by respecting and celebrating the days in a bacchus manner. Dionysus is present in Antioch through numerous dionisos⁵. Moreover, even the feasts dedicated to Zeus, Christ or the Christian martyrs became common celebrations turned into Dionysiac celebrations⁶.

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According to Louis Gernet & André Boulanger, *Le génie grec dans la religion*, Albin Michel, 1970, p. 174 și Louis Séchan & Pierre Léveque, *Les grandes divinités de la Grèce*, éditions E. de Boccard, 1966, p. 296, the Dionisos were the annual religious festivities dedicated to god Dionysus in ancient Greece. During the celebration, participants were invited to compete themselves in oratorical competitions, called ὀγών. During the Dionisos all the city activities stopped, and people were all invited to attend the event, which forced the social connection. The legal proceedings were interrupted, and the prisoners were temporarily released to attend the celebrations. The rural Dionisos, called also the small or peasant Dionisos, were religious feasts organized by the demes in Attica, especially in Poseidon's month of the Attic calendar, corresponding to the month of December in the Julian calendar. Perhaps other demes were celebrating Dionysus on different dates, being known the fact that the passionates used to go to these celebrations in various places. The organization of the holiday was the responsibility of the leader of the deme. Among the popular celebrations of these Dionisos was the game called in ancient Greek ἀσκωλιασμός, which consisted of jumping on one leg on oiled bellows. The processions of the characters (in Greek κῶμοι) disguised during these celebrations represent one of the sources of the origin of the ancient comedy. The central element of the rural Dionisos were the phallophores: in front of the procession crossing the city or its suburbs, the phallophores were wearing a gigantic sexual object, followed by the multitude of characters with swollen faces, smeared with wine yeast, joking, making obscene gestures and covering their faces. During these processions, there were prayers for fertility fields. There were held tragic and comic performances, even if we have no evidence of their precise structure and course which would allow us an accurate reconstruction. Also, it is uncertain if the theatrical contests were taking place at the same time.

⁶ M. Janowitz, "The Rhetoric of Translation: Three Early Perspectives on Translating Torah" in the *Harvard Theological Review*, 84 (1991), p. 129-140 argues that banquets, although derail and turn into an absolute scandal, they have however a religious dimension: the punch libations have a magical character, the hand washing is a symbol or a metaphor of the clean life, wearing flower wreaths indicates an initiation and even the eternal happiness of the deads is conceived as a banquet.

In antiquity, not only the city of Olympia hosted games, but also in other cities such competitions were held, as an imitation of those of Olympia. Among them, it was also, Antioch, whose games were held until 521⁷, when they were banned by Emperor Justin⁸.

They no longer had the same splendour as in the past, mainly because in the fifth century they became a secular ceremony. Their religious component, that is, the dedication of these competitions to Zeus had gone. It seems that towards the end of the fourth century, the Olympic Games were also organized, at least nominally, in the honour of Zeus, which determined a vehement branding from the part of St. John Chrysostom. In fact, all the Christian writers have criticized the Roman performances and those of the Hellenistic tradition⁹. The censorship was due to the fact that these ones were consecrated to the gods, and therefore, had an idolatrous significance, and the Christians who were watching them indulged in an intolerable sin – the idolatry. On the other hand, some Christian writers were associating certain moral sins with every place that hosted performances: the anger with circus, the lust with theatre and the cruelty with auditorium¹⁰.

Contrary to those who see the fourth century as the period of the last conflict between a declining paganism and a triumphant Christianity, it seems clear that Christians and pagans were sharing similar views in terms of mentality and religion, that worth being emphasized and that help us to understand the religious situation in Antioch during the utterance of Chrysostom's homilies.

The fourth century remains one of the religious conflicts. Paganism gives his last fight against the triumphant Christianity, which was crumbled into different factions. The eastern provinces of the Roman Empire are the most turbulent, and Antioch is the centre of many

⁷ Glanville Downey, "The Olympic Games of Antioch in the Fourth Century A.D.", in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 70 (1939), p. 428-38; Claude Millon & Bernard Schouler, "Les jeux olympiques d'Antioche", in *Pallas* 34 (1988), p. 61-76; Nigel Spivey, *The Ancient Olympics*, Oxford, 2004, p. 198-199; Sofie Remijser, "The Introduction of the Antiochene Olympics: A Proposal for a New Date", in *GRBS* 50 2010, p. 411-36; Fernando García Romero, "Sports Festivals like the Olympic Games: Iso-Olympics", in Werner Petermandl & Christoph Ulf (eds.), *Youth, Sport, Olympic Games*, Hildesheim, 2012, p. 59-72.

⁸ Malalas, *Chronographia* XVII, 417, PG 97, 616-7. See also Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch*, Cambridge, 2007.

⁹ Jean-Baptiste Eriau, *Pourquoi les Peres de l'Eglise ont condamne le theatre de leur temps*, Paris-Angers, 1914; Werner Weismann, *Kirche und Schauspiele. Die Schauspiele im Urteil der lateinischen Kirchenvater unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustin*, Würzburg, 1972; Jean Courtes, *Spectacles et jeux a l'époque patristique. Analyse topique, traitement moral et transformation symbolique d'un fait de culture*, Paris, 1973; Ottorino Pasquato, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo. Paganesimo e cristianesimo ad Antiochia e Costantinopoli nel IV secolo*, Roma, 1976; Christine Schnusenberg, *Das Verhältnis von Kirche und Theater. Dargestellt an ausgewählten Schriften der Kirchenvater und liturgischen Texten bis auf Amalarius von Metz (a.d. 775-852)*, Bern, 1981; Richard Fr. DeVoe, *The Christians and the Games. The Relationship between Christianity and the Roman Games from the First through the Fifth Centuries, A.D.*, Lubbock, 1987; Leonardo Lugaressi, *Il teatro di Dio. Il problema degli spettacoli nel cristianesimo antico (II-IV secolo)*, Brescia, 2008.

¹⁰ Juan Antonio Jimenez Sanchez, "The Monk Hypatius and the Olympic Games of Chalcedon", in *Studia Patristica* LX (Papers presented at the 60th International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011), vol. 8: *New Perspectives on Late Antique spectacula*, p. 39-45.

battles. Christians and pagans were confronting each other, each of the camps being equally proud to belong to an important religious centre, which hosted both Apollo and Daphne, and the memories of the first Christian community¹¹.

The last subchapter, "The traditional Hellenism in Antioch", presents certain cultural features of the original hometown of the Syrian, John Chrysostom, Antioch. At that time, it continued to be led by a board of oligarchs, speaking Greek. In this social matrix, the cultivation and the preservation of the Hellenic identity were imperative, not only for practical purposes of communication, trade or advancement in career or civil administration¹². Even more important, this was the way the elite could be distinguished from those of the lower classes or, as it was the perception in those days, from the lower aspects of the human civilization, no matter if in this category were included barbarians, slaves or even ordinary people on the street¹³.

The development of the Greek identity, as it is unanimously acknowledged, was done through *paideia*. *Enkyklion paideia*, or "the common education" began to develop as an education system from the Hellenistic period, and since the first century AD it has found one of its expressions of maturity in the work *Institutio* written by Quintilian (c. 35-100)¹⁴.

For a student who could assimilate *enkyklion paideia*, his rudimentary education started often at home, where he was trained either by a family member or a designated teacher or even an instructor with basic knowledge. A few years later, the student was sent to the local school, where he received secondary education, which consisted in Grammar training and studies of the classical texts¹⁵. In both forms of education, either primary or secondary, the pupil was learning by imitating models or examples (*exampla*)¹⁶. Thus, a student could write his first letter by imitating a model, before passing to copying and memorizing passages from the *Iliad* that teachers used to note on wax tablets¹⁷. The learning through *imitatio exemplorum* used to continue until adolescence, when the student was going to the rhetoric

¹¹ Paul Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au IVe siècle après J.-C.*, Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1955. See especially the 2nd chapter, *La vie religieuse et la vie municipale*, p. 191-216.

¹² Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284-430*, London, Fontana, 1993, p. 152-53.

¹³ Writing about *paideia*, Iamblichus notes that "because of the [paideia] education, people are different from beasts, Greeks from foreigners (barbarians), freemen from slaves and philosophers from ordinary people". Iamblichus, translated by Whitmarsh in Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 90.

¹⁴ The adjective *enkyklion* can mean circular, complete or ordinary. In the case of education, the most frequent translation is *common*, although other meanings aren't necessarily excluded. Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 10-34; Quintilian, *Institutio 1*, translated by Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 127, Harvard University Press, 2002.

¹⁵ Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, Princeton, N.J., Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 47-53.

¹⁶ Quintilian, *Inst. 10.1.15*, translated Russell, *quoted ed.*, p. 259.

¹⁷ Cribiore, *quoted work*, p. 133-134.

school¹⁸. Here, he was reminded by *progymnasmata*, or preliminary exercises commonly used in schools, that if he aspired to become a famous orator, he had to imitate the famous orators of the past: Homer, Demosthene and others¹⁹. The young Chrysostom, apparently, took this advice seriously and often attended the courtrooms, for listening and imitating the lawyers who defended their clients²⁰. His activity at Antioch fits therefore in a context strongly influenced by the rhetorical schools, as a consequence of the impact of the second sophistic period in the Hellenistic world.

It is not so remarkable that St. John Chrysostom studied under the guidance of Libanius, but the fact that he remarked himself in this educational environment, and, like many of his contemporaries used this training to the benefit of the Church. Although the duration of his formation is uncertain, it appears that John was considered as being the protégé of the official sophist in Antioch, as long as - says Sozomen - Libanius complains on his deathbed about the Christians who have taken the one he had thought of as successor²¹.

Regarding his rhetorical instruction, St. John Chrysostom spent much time reading poetry and literature, the most beloved being "Homer, Hesiod and other poets, Demosthenes, Lysias and other orators, Herodotus, Thucydides and other historians"²². During this period, he was probably familiar with the Greek philosophy, although he didn't devote much time to the serious study of philosophy. During the first year of rhetorical education, St. John Chrysostom had probably learned the rhetorical techniques from *progymnasmata*, or the preliminary exercises, created by rhetors in the Late Antiquity²³.

¹⁸ Not all students succeeded in improving their learning of rhetoric. Most people moved from their hometown school in a bigger city, and very often they arrived at a third school in one of the largest educational centers. There was no division of education in elementary schools, grammar and rhetorical schools, but rather a progression to more refined stages of rhetoric knowledge. Raffaella Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 82.

¹⁹ Cribiore states that it was standard practice in the schools of rhetoric, to prescribe readings of historians and orators. These were to be imitated and memorized during the students' public speaking training. A former pupil of Libanius, Aphthonius illustrates various rhetorical techniques, exposed in his *progymnasmata* using fragments from different classical texts (eg Homer) or speeches of the famous orators. A translation of the preliminary exercises or Aphthonius' *progymnasmata* can be consulted at George A Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Series: Writings from the Greco-Roman World, Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, p. 95 - 127. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, p. 227

²⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood* 1, 3, PG 48, 1.

²¹ Sozomen, Hist. 8.2. According to Cribiore, most students were choosing rhetoric because it was a matter of bon ton, rather than to be well trained. Therefore there were too few disciples near a sophist for an extended period of time. If Chrysostom belonged to this demographic profile, he probably did not study with Libanius more than 2-3 years. See R. Cribiore, quoted work, p. 82.

²² The library catalog of Libanius, as Cribiore tells us, was largely similar to those prescribed to the students in rhetoric from elsewhere. Ep. 1036; A. F. Norman, "The Library of Libanius" in *Rheinisches Museum für Philologica* 107 (1964), p. 159; R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Hellenistic and Roman Egypt Education* in Princeton, NJ, Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 227, 237; Eadem, *The School of Libanius* ..., p. 149.

²³ Cribiore notes that only about one-sixth of Libanius's students stayed with him for five to six years. Most of the students were accepted under his tutelage for only one or two years. For this reason, *progymnasmata* was serving to the early stage of training rhetoric to the student. R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, p. 224.

The IInd Chapter of this work is entitled "Christian rhetoric in the fourth century." If we ask ourselves what caused, in the IVth century, the promotion of the Christian preaching on its climactic phase, Pr. Dumitru Belu, in one of his studies related to the preach of the golden age²⁴, tries to give some answers to this question. First of all, the period of persecutions ended, and the Church, released by the worries from outside, could devote itself, undisturbed, to the development of the worship, church architecture, literature, theological sciences and rhetoric. Another factor that contributed to the development of the sermon in the "golden century" was the emphasis on the human element creator in the preparation and utterance of the church speeches. If in the first three centuries the preachers were regarded "as simple bodies for proclaiming God's will"²⁵, starting with the IVth century, the spiritual gifts were increasingly rare, this leading to an increase of the human contribution on the preparation of the sermon and its technical perfection.

The catechetical schools (of Alexandria, Antioch, etc.) have brought, too, a substantial contribution in promoting the sermon. The rhetoric pagan schools of the time had, also, their contribution to the flourishing of the Christian preaching. In using the rhetoric of the time, however, the Church Fathers had the conscience of the differences of substance between the profane oratory and the Christian one.

To some extent, the great development of the sermon in the IVth century, is due to the outstanding appreciation the Greco-Roman world of that time had towards the oratorical art. Such a situation determined the Christian orators that, at the preparation of speeches, to adapt themselves to the listeners so that they could be more easily attracted at the receiving of the divine word.

The coming to Christianity of many candidates, who were no longer required strength of faith during the persecutions, caused an increase in number of the Christians, the eligibility criteria being less stringent. In such circumstances, there appeared the great heresies, which were a test as tough as the persecutions. The struggle from the end of the life of St. John Chrysostom who spent a long time in exile stands as a testimony to these troubled times, full of challenges, too.

Yet, these torments have brought to light the great personalities of the Christian literature, who dominated the difficulties of the times and decided the course of events,

²⁴ Pr. Dr. Dumitru Belu, "The Sermon of the Golden Age", the Metropolitan of Transylvania, year IX (1964), no. 1-2, pp. 118-127.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

creating "the golden age" of the Christian thinking, which led to the unprecedented development of the Christian preaching.

If we perceive St. John Chrysostom isolated, just as the exemplary figure of the Christian preacher, he can become an ideological construct. We can admire his persuasive power without correlating it with his audience receptivity and the historical and cultural context in which he served²⁶. In Late Antiquity, the speech was dictated predominantly by the five currents of the tradition: the Greco-Roman *paideia*, the philosophical ethics, the biographical and rhetoric traditions and the Christian heritage which St. John Chrysostom belonged to. That's why, in the section entitled "St. John Chrysostom - disciple at the Rhetoric School of Libanius" I wanted to insist on the rhetorical techniques encountered in the homilies of this Holy Father, because it would be unacceptable not to admit the background of rhetoric culture of his role as a preacher as well as his influence on the content of his sermons. In another chapter, "The Dynamics of the relationship between St. John and his audience during the sermon", we analyse his homily in relation to the content and the carrying out of the Liturgy. Certain questions have arisen from this circumstance: Who was listening? Where was he preaching? When? How was realized the interaction between St. John and his audience? Why were the believers listening to the famous preacher? We have tried to answer all these questions.

The next chapter, the third of the work, I've called it "The Exegesis of the New Testament in the vision of St. John Chrysostom". In the patristic period, there were *certain* stages of the interpretation of the New Testament, interpretations which were marked by the activity of the Gnostics, of St. Justin the Martyr and the Philosopher (ca. 100-165) and of Irenaeus (ca. 130-200). Then two schools of exegesis remarked themselves: the Alexandrian school, whose representatives were Philo (app. 20 BC - 50 AC), Clement of Alexandria app. 150-app. 215) and Origen (185-254) and the School of Antioch, represented by Lucian of Samosata (+ 312), Diodorus of Tarsus (ca. 330-392), Theodore of Mopsuestia (app. 350-428), Theodoret of Cyr (393-457) and Ephrem (306 -373). After studying the contribution of each of these authors to the development of biblical exegesis, I went to analyse the contribution of St. John Chrysostom in the interpretation of the New Testament.

I was concerned about the concept of the Holy Father about the ways of transmission of the divine Revelation: the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, about the canon of the Sacred Scripture, about the Complementarity of the Old Testament and New Testament and

²⁶ D.J. Constantelos, "John Chrysostom's Greek classical education and its importance to us today", in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36 (1991), p. 109-129.

the Understanding of the Old Testament through the New Testament, about the inspiration of the authors of the New testament. I have dedicated a subchapter to the interpretation of the biblical text by St. John Chrysostom, in which I have analysed the peculiarities of the exegesis of St. John, the interpretation method, and I have highlighted passages from the homilies where he uses the literal-historic sense, the anagogical one, the allegorical one or the typical sense.

As Chrysostom was considering reading the New Testament as a daily obligation of the Christian, I have analysed some homiletic passages where he speaks about the reading at home of the New Testament, about the purpose of reading and about the benefits of the biblical reading.

Other exegetical passages treat the difficulty of the interpretation. Chrysostom claims the correct understanding of the Scripture, which means to criticize the text and make references to the previous interpreters. Also, the interpretation of the New Testament requires some specific preparation. The interpreter is required some knowledge and, especially, the purification of the senses to receive the word of God.

The IVth Chapter of this work is entitled "Chrysostomian Christology and newly testamentary exegesis". The red line in this chapter is part of the theologians' concerns who have examined the close relationship between the doctrinal, sacramental and praxiological views of the Holy Father. The vital correlation between exegesis and practice in the patristic thinking must be taken into consideration in any assessment of the Christological positions. Chrysostom's doctrine regarding Christ the Saviour is closely related to life in the Church. Within this conceptual frame, the homilies of St. John related to the New Testament books arouse some particular interest. The Christological portrait which is outlined in these exegetical writings insists on both, the sacramental presence of Christ in the Church - His Body, and on the Christian conversion to Christ likeness.

The reading of his exegetical homilies betrays the fact that his pastoral concerns govern his preaching, and his thoughts regarding the doctrine are inseparable from the life of faith and the worship of the Church. In Chrysostom's theology there is an indestructible link between doctrine and *praxis*. Isolating his doctrine from the moralizing thinking leads to a bland representation of the Christological conception. John Chrysostom's Christology is neither theoretical, nor speculative, but rather pastoral in its essence. Any assessment of the matters of Christology must take into account the relationship between doctrine and the context of the statement. Within this framework, we analysed particularly exegetical

comments on the Gospel of John and the Epistle to Hebrew to synthesize his thinking about Christ.

I have found that the interpreter uses the Nicene or post-Constantinople terminology, namely those formulations that have received credit from the ecumenical councils of 325 and 381. The Creed from Constantinople in 381 was using the following faith formulations:

[τὸν νιὸν τοῦ θεοῦ] τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα, πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα or ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί. I have identified, in St. John's works, each of these faith formulations.

L. Ayres²⁷ highlighted several features common to the theological writings from the fourth century which defend the unity and the distinction of the people of the Trinity and which reflect the Nicene Creed. The authors who treat the irreducible unity of the three people and who have always in mind the absolute distinction between God as the only reality truly simple and creation, present some common features, grafted on the criteria of the partitive exegesis that seeks to strengthen the distinctions between person and nature, as well as the one between God and creation. Beside the partitive exegesis, the moderate use of the analogy and on the claim of approaching with the pure soul of the scriptural text, present at St. John Chrysostom, too, Ayres has also in mind the following pro-Nicene strategies: the use of a specific terminology, the doctrine of the simplicity of the divine nature, the incomprehensibility of God, that of the inseparable actions as well as the speech against rationalizing faith. I've proved that Chrysostom is part of the same patterns of the pro-Nicene theology.

The historical incarnation Chrysostom speaks about as *oikonomia* is understood as being the reason of the restoration from the bondage of sin of the fallen humanity from and it is united inseparably by the Chrysostomian understanding of salvation²⁸. Just as God's *philanthropia* and Christ's *oikonomia* are united, so the incarnation is seen as a keystone of the divine plan of salvation, not only as a cosmic event. For Chrysostom, the incarnation, the life and death of Christ is a reflection of God's love, manifested in the divine condescension of the second Person of the Holy Trinity.

St. John sees Logos as a single subject in Christ, who fraternizes with us through assumed humanity, suffers and dies to make us members of one family and restore our fellowship with God.

²⁷ L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: an approach to fourth-century Trinitarian theology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 278 sq

²⁸ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 2nd ed., London, SPCK, 1952, p. 57-67 remarks that the term *oikonomia* is preferred by Chrysostom, synonymous with the term dispensation, condescension, a special taking care, etc, used by Fathers starting from the third century.

In the subchapters "The ontological and personal continuity of son in his existence embodied in the one post-resurrection "," Restoring the human nature " and "The Adoption of the baptized" I have presented the Christology concept of St. John Chrysostom, who, by spreading his homilies in the Christian world, became as a landmark in the preaches of the following centuries: the communion with God of which man has enjoyed after his creation was altered by the sin that led to corruption and death. The Saviour has remedied this distance by assuming the body and offering the framework of salvation through His Incarnation. This salvation has involved the restoration of the human nature from the corruption of death to the eternal life.

Another chapter is devoted to the Christology of Chrysostom entitled "Christ, ontologically present in the sufferance of the poor". When Chrysostom interprets the passage from Mt. 25, 31-46, he remarks the link between the social ethics (e.g. charity) and salvation. The exegete thinks of salvation as an ongoing process, available in the possibility of providing food and warmth to Christ, and which is in the poor. In this way, charity and generosity are received directly by Christ and are an integral part of salvation. St. John Chrysostom is convinced of the real presence of Christ in the poor. The response to the presence of Christ in the poor has a double benefit: the temporal saving of the poor and the saving or the eternal salvation of the rich.

The honest anger of the exegete caused by the difference between the luxury of the rich Christians and the subsistence condition of the homeless people is expressed in the statement which sustains that ignoring beggars means ignoring Christ, who is present in them. Chrysostom designates himself ambassador of the poor. He encourages the individual patronage of the poor and advises that charity should be unconditioned, for defending the dignity of the person it is offered to. The slave system was a constant threatening towards the redemption of God's creation, so we can take into account, also, the statement of certain patristic scholars that the Archbishop was thinking of a reform, arguing the equality between the slave and the master and even idealizing emancipation.

When he interprets the text of Mt. 25, 31-46, he does it respecting the spirit of literalism in Antioch. This thing allowed the exegete to conclude that God's original intention did not include private property and social stratification. Chrysostom leads his audience to the perspective of the general administration of goods, updated through charity, which depends only on the nobility of the giving spirit, and not of the recipient's worthiness. Chrysostom leads his flock to an attitude of spiritual egalitarianism, in which Christ doesn't show any partiality towards the social status, but invites the masters and the slaves at His banquet, too.

The fifth chapter of the book deals with the soteriological aspects of the exegetical works of St. John. Everywhere, Chrysostom shows that the subjective salvation is achieved in the Sacramental space of the Church, through the grace of the Holy Spirit interceded by Holy Sacraments and the word of the Gospel as well as through faith and good deeds. Specific to this St. Father is the way in which he conceives salvation: as an angelic life and as deification. I've dedicated the special subchapters within this chapter of Soteriology to these views. Conceiving the union with Christ as the means by which the Christian transcends the human nature, St. John Chrysostom endorses the idea of Athanasius that the Incarnation has brought together what was human by nature with what belonged to the divinity and, thus, he allowed the first to achieve the trans-human qualities of the latter. In some other part, in Homily 6 at Colossians, he conceptualizes this union in a similar way to St. Basil, considering it like a second creation of the Holy Spirit, not without resemblance to the Incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Virgin through the same Spirit. What St. John Chrysostom is doing here is not only the assimilation of the concept of St. Basil regarding the work of deification of the Spirit. By situating the discussion in the context of the Christian baptism and the adoption of the language regarding the mixture (*νακεράννυσαι*), he takes into account the sacramental formulation of the union of the Christian with Christ, union which is present at St. Gregory from Nyssa²⁹.

The resemblance with the Cappadocians and the Alexandrians does not end there. In other sermons of his, Chrysostom underlines the need for Christians to cultivate *apatheia* and *aretaī* in their life, so as to reach the life of angels or the divine likeness³⁰. Furthermore, he agrees, like St. Athanasius, Basil and Gregory, that this angelic or divine life can be achieved, at least to some extent, in this age.

Another part of this chapter is dedicated to the concept of ἀρετή, e.g. of virtue, that we frequently encounter in Chrysostom's homiletic pages. His concept about the human virtue is largely dictated by seeing the human *telos* as the participation to the love of God and neighbour.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to ecclesiological issues. I've called it "Plasticity in the ecclesiological approaches from the exegetical homilies" because of the fact that Chrysostom illustrates the truths about Church using a lot of metaphors, most of them of Biblical nature. We meet in his homilies frequent synonymies between the Church and the Body of Christ

²⁹ In *Homilies on Matthew*, 82.5, St. John Chrysostom follows St. Gregory, speaking of Eucharist as a means by which Christ Himself interferes with the Christians. For details about the restoration work of the Spirit during the baptism, see the instructions ninth and eleventh of the Baptismal Catecheses.

³⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homilies 23 and 24; Homily 1 Timothy, Homily 13; *Homilies on Jews*, 24.

(Σώμα Χριστού) the Bride of Christ (Νύμφη Χριστού), the Flock of Christ (το λογικον του Χριστου ποίμνιον), etc. The Church is seen as soul (ψυχή), as mother (μήτηρ) of the Christians, as the Kingdom (βασιλεία) or the Citadel (πόλης) of God, as the house (οίκος) of God, but also, as a battle camp (τοστρατόπεδον), as a tent of the testimony (η σκηνή του Μαρτυρίου), as the artist's workshop (ζωγραφείον), as the painter's vat (βαφείον), as the shirt or the tunic (τον χιτώνα, χιτών αλουργίς). Other images complete this shaded picture of the Church: the ocean (πέλαγος), the sea (θάλαττα), the port (λιμήν), the ship and the new ark (πλοίον, κιβωτός), the anchor (ἄγκυρα), the cultivated field (ἄρουρα), the meadow(λιμών) or the vines (ἄμπελος).

Chrysostom reveals the centrality of the Church in humanity and creation. The metaphorical images he employs to portray the Church reveals its purification, sanctification and restoration through Christ. This new state of the Church was prefigured through the types in the Old Testament. The Ecclesiology of Chrysostom is scripturally grounded, the exegete using especially books of the Old Testament as The Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, The Ecclesiastes, the prophets Ezekiel, Amos, Song of Solomon, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, The Psalms of David, the wisdom of Solomon, and from the New Testament the Gospels, Pauline epistles, Epistle 1 Peter and the book The Deeds of the Apostles, which contain one or more explicit or implicit references to ecclesiology. Therefore, these images used in the homilies aren't Chrysostom's own invention. However, the originality and topicality lies in the message the exegete conveys. His erudition, the finesse of the exegetical analysis and the unequalled penetration of the meanings of the biblical passages help him obtain an ecclesiological synthesis and dissemination of the Scripture that few Fathers of the Church were able to achieve.

Through the Church it is realized the greatest of all mysteries of Christ: His presence uninterrupted in creation. The saving work of Christ in and through His Church reveals the nobility of the Church.

Although there is no sequence in the development of ecclesiology which St. John Chrysostom makes in his homilies, his vast knowledge and the mastery of the biblical texts allow him to rely on their boundless wealth and to raise issues related to the church, using one or more of the images that the biblical text provides at a certain period of time. This shows that, although St. John Chrysostom sees the Church from many angles, it remains unique and immutable. Since the exegete believes that the Scriptures contain the wisdom of God about Christ and the Church, or the great Mystery of the dispensation of man's salvation, he applies

their healing power in different circumstances, with the intention of keeping love, unity, purity and peace in the Church and protecting it from the outside enemies.

Chrysostom doesn't synthesize his ecclesiological conception in a certain way, because each image used represents the fullness of Christ, the whole truth which is the Church of God, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. He uses these images to reveal different aspects of the Church and the renewing effect on the human beings and the world. He tackles different themes within his analysis about Church. In many homilies he talks about the same theme, but using a different image to provide the best solution for clarifying any issues that the Church might face.

The key of Chrysostom's ecclesiology consists in understanding the hypostasis of Jesus Christ. In the homilies of the exegete Chrysostom, we note that the Person of Jesus Christ the Savior is understood in two ways. One is the understanding of Jesus Christ as the historical and objective Person, or the incarnated Truth. This mode of apprehending Christ cannot avoid the distance between Him and us, which can be covered only by the gracious means of communicating the truth, produced with the assistance and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The other is the type of Christology in which Christ, although private person, is seen in his relational functionality with His Body, the Church. In this type of Christology, the Holy Spirit is not someone who assists us filling the gap between Christ and us, but a person of the Trinity who carries in history the catholic Body of Christ - the Church. In this way, Christology is constituted pneumatologically. Between Christ and us there is no distance and empty space that must be covered by means of grace. Updating the Christ event in history, the Holy Spirit suddenly realizes it, both in its ontological particularity of distinct personality, and in His functional ability of Body of the Church and the recapitulation of all things. "So great is the mystery of Christology that Christ event is one that does not define itself ... but as an integrative part of the dispensation of the Holy Trinity. Talking about Christ means to speak at the same time about the Father and the Spirit"³¹.

Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, "homoousios" with the Father and the Spirit. The exegete Chrysostom sees the Church in the light of the relationship between Father and Son. He speaks of unity in diversity and diversity in unity, just as Father and Son are two distinct Persons, yet one God. He suggests that the same type of relationship there is between God's Church and the Churches of God as the one between Father and Son. Thus, each local church is the Church in its totality and not a part of an all-embracing whole consisting of local

³¹ Dumitru Pintea, "Spirit and institution in the Orthodox ecclesiology", in *Lumina* Newspaper, October 21, 2012, available online at <http://ziarullumina.ro/analiza/duh-si-institutie-ecclesiologia-ortodoxa>

Churches and managed by a single head. It is the Church in its entirety, by virtue of being in it manifests the fullness of truth, whose principle is the Person of the divine Logos (Jesus Christ). On one hand, it is also the center of its own unity and Catholicity, but on the other hand, it cannot pretend to possess or exercise this fullness of the truth in a greater or lesser extent than any other local Church where it is manifested the person of Christ, and neither can become a center of unity and catholicity beyond any other local church. Just as the persons of the Trinity cannot express their intrinsic unity separated from each other, so the local Churches cannot exercise the unity and catholicity that each has fully than in the reciprocity and intercommunion which characterize the relationship between the three divine Persons. Here, the unity is involved in diversity and vice versa.

The earliest discussions, starting with Origen, have in the center Christ's assertion addressed to St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (9:5). These discussions capture the identity of Christ and his ecclesial Body. The assertion of this identity or unity we frequently find at the Parents from the end of the fourth century: St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom and Augustine. In Chrysostom's thinking, the Church, as one Body united, has always existed, because it is associated with the Person of Christ, the eternal Son of God. Therefore, the Church includes all the human beings of all times, those that God loves, who accept Christ and worship Him as a true God. The ecclesiological teaching of Chrysostom is exposed beside the emphasis of Christ's divinity, attacked by Aryan, and his humanity, attacked by Apollinarians. Chrysostom illustrates the reality of these two natures in Christ, who is of the same nature with the Father³² and has a human body, not a sinner like ours, but identical to ours by nature³³. The unmistakable union of the divine and human natures in Christ³⁴ is vital to the existence and the identity of the Church.

Starting from the great purity and restoration come through Christ, St. John Chrysostom shows the Church as a divine-human and theandric reality. The earthly form of the Church is rooted in its divine form and indissolubly united with it. The first cannot be separated from the latter as the natures of Christ cannot be separated. To separate them means ripping the seamless robe of Christ and making the Church on earth stop being the direct manifestation of Christ, the sacrament of Lord or Theophany. Chrysostom has shown on numerous occasions that the understanding of the Church depends

³² Homilies on Matthew 1: PG 57, 17; Against The Anomies 4 PG 48, 732.

³³ Homilies on Romans 13.

³⁴ Homilies on Philippians 7; Homilies on John 11.

on a very realistic sense of the Eucharist and the Eucharistic presence. The Church is the Body of Christ and this is revealed concretely in the Eucharistic mystery.

The mystery of Christ is a created one, but also an uncreated reality, because Christ is really present, both spiritually and bodily in the Eucharist. Therefore, every participant at the Eucharist becomes physically and spiritually integrated in Jesus Christ.

This Christocentric conception about the Church requires a certain type of Christology. Christ, the second person of the Trinity, has two natures, a human one (with body and soul) and the other one divine. It can be said that the same union of the human with the divine that appears entirely, without confusion and hypostatically in Christ, happens as potentiality in every human being. Therefore, man can achieve the integrity of his theandric nature only through the Church. Just as in Christ God is inseparably united with the humanity, the human nature of man is inseparably united with the divine. The church is the manifestation of this unity as the Body of Christ. By participating to this Body, the human beings become the Body of Christ, a divine-human reality. The church is the existential statement or the proclamation of this mystery, both from God and from man.

The Church, as the Body of Christ, is primarily understood in a Christological sense. Christological, this Body is identified with the Body assumed by the Son of God at the Incarnation.

Having the role of Groom, He takes the Church (the stained human nature), cleans it and embraces it like His Own Body through the Sacraments of Penance, Baptism and the Eucharist. Each Christian soul is a picture of the Church by adopting the apostolic faith in Christ, by the adorning with virtues, especially that of love and becomes himself a bride or chaste virgin of Christ. Collectively, all these souls constitute the fullness of the Church and they are the heirs of God's heavenly kingdom. This unfathomable union between God and man is the mystery of Christ in which all the human beings are attracted, and those who join become members, altogether co-heirs and co-participants. Therefore, the holy body of Christ refers not only to the humanity of the Son, but includes all the Christians who receive His Body, in the Eucharist. We see, here from the exegete Chrysostom, an association of the Christological issues, sacramental and anthropological of the "Body of Christ". Consequently, the Church is a new union between God and humanity, a new Adam, who stands gloriously in heaven, on a throne next to the Son of God. The foundation of the Church and its existence is represented by Christ. Through it comes the salvation and redemption of mankind. As such, it reveals the wisdom of God to the whole creation.

The Church is seen as an environment for the activities of Son and Holy in the world, as the only place where people can experience the communion with God and the authentic communion with the other people. The Church is this extension of Christ to people, that is a social extension of the Risen Christ. It is the space where holiness is achieved gradually, to the extent of people's likeness with Christ.

The church is the body of Christ just because the same Spirit of the Son united in Christ all its members, as His brothers and as brothers among them, and thus led them all together in the bosom of the one and the same subsidiary relationship with the Father. The church is only a theophany of the Holy Trinity.

Besides the Holy Spirit that maintains the state of unity of the Church, the exegete emphasizes the unifying role of the prayer in achieving the unity of the Church. The living people, the angels and the saints, all are connected in the praise to God, which gives the prayer a unifying role. In the Church, all are united, but unconfused in this unity. Another dimension of the understanding of the Church by St. John is the mysterious or sacramental one, connected to the theandric constitution of the Church. The exegete speaks of the Church not only as an abstract concept, but refers to the real people, historian of God, to the reality of the local Church. The church is not only a divine work, but it involves free human response. The Salvation itself is realized as a result of the cooperation between the divine grace and the human freedom. The Church exists as a result of the synergy between God and humanity.

The Son is the Head, the Teacher and the Lord His Body, as well as the foundation stone on which the Jews and Gentiles are united as one new man. Because He is consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Church belongs to the whole Trinity. The Trinitarian work on the ecclesial Body is experienced as it follows: the Spirit forms the Body through Baptism, nourishes it through the Eucharist and lives inside it and maintains its unity while the Father glorifies him at His right in heaven. Talking about the Body of the Son, St. John Chrysostom highlights three meanings of the word "church." These are: 1) the Eucharistic assembly, 2) the human soul and 3) son's body. When speaking about the Church as a Eucharistic Assembly, he finds the perfect opportunity to talk about the Church in these terms. Realizing that only during the Eucharistic assembly the Son is present in a concrete way, uniting with Himself the souls of all Christians and making each of them icons of the Church through the sacraments, St. John Chrysostom says that the Son restores the Church/ the soul to the state before the fall. In addition, the Son gives him strength to live accordingly to the model of the heavenly life, cleanses it and places it at the Father's right hand in heaven.

Regardless of how the Church is described, it has its existence and identifies itself with the incarnate and raised Son of God, where the Spirit of God dwells.

Moreover, the Church is in the soul of the person who is gentle, pious and God-loving, who believes in the humanity and the full divinity of Christ. The Church which makes place in the soul of the believer can properly interpret the Scripture about the Person of Christ, because it, as St. John Chrysostom emphasizes in Homily 30 of the Commentary on Romans, it is none other than Christ Himself. Christ / Church is intimately united with the soul that praises God and appears to the whole world as a demonstration of the power of His Cross, the Tomb and the Resurrection.

Therefore, Christ (the Church) lives in the soul, when the latter is His image. By the perfect tropos of Christ (His existence characterized by obedience, love, righteousness, holiness and purity), the old devil's curse on mankind (the spiritual and physical death) was lost forever. The heavenly Church, or the new Eve, rescues us from the devil's judgment and from the eternal punishment to the extent that it is sacramentally made again from the clean and perfect rib of the second Adam, Who was wounded while hanging on the cross. Therefore, when members of the Church participate directly to the new humanity through the sacraments of repentance, Baptism and, finally, the Eucharist, share the same glory of Christ and in turn they convey it to all things, in virtue of communion with Christ, in the Spirit. The biblical text in Galatians 3:28 (in Christ Jesus "there is no male and female part) proves to be a key one for the understanding of man's fall and his restoration through Christ's sacrifice. Regarding verse 28, St. John Chrysostom, in Homily 17 of the Commentary on Ephesians, shows that the incarnate Son of God, in His humanity was a perfect paradigm of the complete cooperation between human and divine. In Christ, both powers that stimulate the soul, that is the anger and the desire, were in a total balance. In Christ, both powers are tempered by the Very Word. Anger is replaced by gentleness and desire by humility. Similarly, any believer can balance these powers with the help of the prayer, the ascetic exercises and virtues, according to Christ's teaching (e.g. The Beatitudes from Matthew 5, 3 to 11). When these powers are stabilized, the Christian can clearly perceive the Truth with the eye of the soul; can receive the Sacraments and God's saving grace. Since Christ is not against rationality that is related to the human side, there is no damage or death. Similarly, the mystery of salvation is working in those who want to be saved. So as the sin is born of the will, the same is with the salvation.

In Homily 17, St. John Chrysostom goes on to say that the faculties of the soul must be disciplined and coordinated in a harmonious unity, just like the restive horses in harness,

by laying over them the mind as a charioteer, so that the soul would answer the call (Phil. 3, 14) that God makes him, in Lord Christ. A soul is truly under the yoke of Logos when it is received in the Eucharist. For this reason, St. John Chrysostom says in several places throughout this homily that those who gather in Church for the Eucharistic celebration are truly human beings and thoughtful sheep of Christ, while those that mushroomed in the markets don't differ too much from the irrational animals (emptied of Logos). Therefore, a human being is truly rational and able to share full humanity (the Church) to new Adam, when the component parts of his soul – the will, the mood, the thoughts, the consciousness, the motivation, the spiritual faculties and especially the mind (the eye of the soul) - are virtuous, Christ-centred, focused on the heavenly things and impregnated of Logos and His Sacraments.

The participation of Moses and of the children of Israel at the manna and drink in the wilderness is a type of Communion of the Church in the Sacrament of the Body and the Blood of Christ. The crossing of the Red Sea symbolizes the Baptism. The assembly in the wilderness represents the Eucharistic assembly of the Church. This shows that the Church existed typologically in the Old Testament. Once Christ – the Truth appeals to our nature, the Church members communicate clearly and directly to Him. The tent of Abraham in the Old Testament, according to St. John Chrysostom, is the equivalent of God's Church. The theophany of Abraham's tent shows that the Church is not only a reality of the New Testament, but it has always existed and will exist continuously as the eternal Son of God is its source of life. Whenever Christ is present, His Church is there, too.

The Church is represented iconic in the Old Testament by Sara, and her sons are represented by Isaac. There is a strong contrast between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem. Heavenly Jerusalem is free, fruitful and it is the result of Christ's Resurrection. The earthly one, symbolized by Hagar, is unfaithful, useless and condemned to slavery together with her children (the Jews), because it wasn't recreated in Christ, disagrees and does not believe in the resurrection of Christ and doesn't live a new life recommended by God in the Gospel.

The Church of the Trinitarian God emerges from the nations, not from the Jews. Through Baptism and kerygma, the Church is founded specifically and manifests itself in many places on earth for people to join and to worship God. The Jewish temple in any case is not the Church, because it is polluted and desecrated, while the Church is holy. Although the Church came out of the nations, it does not oppose the Law but it is the fulfilling of the Law.

The Church is the place where heaven and earth are joined. It is nothing else than heaven itself.

In many cases, St. John Chrysostom uses the singular, but also the plural form of the word "church." He explains that the Universal Church is made up of all the churches around the world, which are peacefully united, in communion with each other and following the apostolic commandments. The fullness of the Universal Church is concrete and complete in each of these Churches. For this reason, St. John Chrysostom confirms that the problem a (local) Church is facing affects the whole Church, and it is the duty of all members of the Church to ensure the health and the unity of the Church.

The unity between the Church and the Body of the Begotten Son of God and the equality of all human beings in the Church are signs of the Church nobility. The Church is a frightening and respectable congregation, which is related to Christ. It has nothing to do with the world. It covers only heavenly things and serves as depositary of the Scriptures - the mouth of God and prophets. The church is made up of free men and women, created by God with strong will and wonderful souls embellished virtues. These people offer their souls to God, to escape from death and gain eternal salvation.

Even the term of "church" symbolizes the harmony and the understanding, and defines an unshakable and unbreakable unity. Chrysostom understands the Church in the same manner as St. Paul. He sees the Church in a given locality as a concrete manifestation of God's Church when its members are clean, united through unbreakable bounds of love and when they serve the Lord Christ. All Christians, as the Body or as members of the Body of Christ, have the responsibility to remain united by love and remove from their inside the envy, the jealousy, the arrogance and the accusations that fracture the body. The members of the Church of God, when joined together, are humble, meek, confess the same faith and serve God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Church leaders and laity must cooperate to protect the body of Christ against fragmentation. The lay people have a great responsibility both to God and to the Church leaders to preserve the unity of the Church. The healthy members of the Body of Christ must heal the brothers who are sick and threaten the unity of the Body. Otherwise, they do not have Christ as leader and they serve the devil. Those who do not have Christ as Helmsman may fall into heresy, being excluded from the Church.

The members of the Body must follow the decisions of the Fathers of Nicaea (325), observing the feasts of the Church and the ecclesiastical decisions. As a natural consequence of this fact, the lay people are obliged to obey the leaders of the Church, namely the bishops,

who are implementing the decisions of the Apostolic Fathers, and those that guarantee the unity of the Church.

God's flock, during the celebration of the Eucharist, must remain united because the Lord's Body or the Lord's Supper is prepared for all these, demonstrating their dignity and equality. In the midst of a united flock the presence of Christ at this Supper makes that the Church would manifest concretely *there and then*. The unity and the equality in the Church is best seen when Christians gather in one flock to worship, and then to eat the prepared Meal. In addition, having only a Father, a Head, a Shepherd, a King, a Teacher, a Judge, a Door, a Path, a Root, a Life, a Table, a Chalice and one Drink, all the Christians are united among them during this solemn moment of the manifestation of Christ in the sacraments.

The characteristic signs of the Church are: 1) absolute faith and the fear of Christ as God, 2) love, 3) moderation, 4) patience, 5) equality, 6) humility, 7) piety, 8) total dedication to God, 9) charity, and 10) repentance.

The church is God's friend. As such, it has the mind of Christ and there were discovered the God's secrets. The church serves as trustee and depositary of the untold Mysteries of God, both verbal (Gospel) and practical (The Sacraments of the Eucharist, of Baptism, etc.) It is a demonstration of the Resurrection of Christ, of the Gospel and of the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Apostles.

The Church is eschatological insofar as it participates at the resurrection of Christ and it puts trust and hope in God's Providence. The Church anticipates the Second Coming of Christ and demonstrates this longing every time it participates in the Sacraments. The Eucharistic assembly cannot be treated separately from the Body of the Son of God, because the direct and unique connection between the assembly of the faithful people and the Son is the humanity of the Son. The participation in the Sacrament of the Body of Christ transforms this congregation into the righteous people of God and in a festive gathering of angels mentioned in the Hebrew 12, 22.

The church is characterized as being the place where there are greeted with great hospitality those people under whose faces Christ is disguised. Therefore, when a person is granted refuge or is aided by the Church, it is the same as God Himself would get that help. Church is where mercy is visible, and this act drives away the devil.

The invulnerability of the Church is not only due to mercy, but also to the Scripts that are properly read and interpreted in the Church and ultimately to the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church. The Holy Spirit remodels and renews constantly the Christians' souls burdened

of sins. The Church is the place where God is praised and prayed. It remains a place of contemplation of the spiritual things, a place of cleaning and confession. The Church is where two or three people are gathered in the name of Christ and where Christ, the angels and the citizens of heaven live. The heavenly reality of the Church is witnessed in the liturgical assembly, where the union of heaven and earth is made concrete.

The scriptural basis for the existence of the Heavenly Church is the ecclesiological passage from Hebrew 12, 18-24. Based on the Pauline concept, St. John Chrysostom interprets passages from Isaiah's prophecies and the Psalms. The interpreter shows that in the Old Testament the prophecies speak in an anagogic way about the Church and that both the Old and New Testament are in unison about the Church of God.

The Church in heaven and on earth are one and the same. The continuity is achieved by the Holy Spirit and Christ, who live in the Church. The Holy Spirit and Christ make the Church invincible in front of its enemies. In the Church live the human beings that have been remodeled in Christ, the martyrs and the saints of both Testaments, as well as the heavenly powers, all celebrating a holiday of light.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the portal through which human beings (Christians) can enter and discover the heavenly Church of God with its infinite and eternal treasures and symbols of the victory over the death, the sin and the devil. The Church is a new creature in Christ, and its children are the new Zion or Israel. It was recreated after the image of its Creator, Jesus Christ. This Church lives a new life, which is presented in the Gospel.

The Church is a safe and fast boat, sailing from earth to heaven. Its stability consists in the Divine Scripture on which it is built. The Invincibility is due to the words of Christ (Mt. 16, 18) and to the apostolic faith in the Begotten Son of God.

The Apostles, especially St. Peter and Paul, are called the parents, the pillars, the guardians and the eyes of the Church. The unanimity between St. Peter and Paul, as a unique body protecting the true faith, illustrates the unity of the Church. The Church dogmas and the teachings of the Apostles defend the Church against the devil and stop him from making scenarios regarding its members. According to the Scripture, the Church has always existed. The Prophets and the Apostles were its leaders who, in conformity with the will of God, have established the behaviour of the whole Church by their teachings.

The Church preaches and defends the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, especially of the Apostle Paul. It remains attached to the Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul, which maintain its integrity, give it health and protect it against the devil and all the other enemies. From the Holy Spirit, working through the Apostle Paul, the Church of God gets

strengthening, protection and training on the way you must live the virtuous life. It is eternal, heavenly, founded on Christ /the Gospel, the Apostles and the repentance that leads us to Christ. The Apostles were using the spiritual net Apostles of the Holy Spirit in order to bring people to the Church. They filled the world with the glory of Christ and the faith and they hunted the heretics who wanted to harm the Church.

The Church celebrates St. Mass, celebrated for the first time in the Gazebo on the Top, in the first day of the week (The Day of Lord), by the disciples who have gathered to hear the kerygma and break the bread. This is actually the Eucharist, Christ's Mystagogy, the celebration and the communion with the Holy Body of Christ, the blood of the Lord, the Sacrament of Peace and the Sacrifice on the cross. The Church celebrates the Liturgy when it commemorates the events of Christ's life, the martyrs and the saints who were well-pleasing to God over the time. At this moment, the whole Church in heaven and on earth is united and present near its Lord in the St. Communion. The Church becomes a participant at the Christ's victory over Satan, the sin and the death. By participating to such a celebration, the Church receives the Holy Spirit from the Son of God, for reinforcement, the receiving of heavenly goods, salvation, rebirth, the forgiveness of sins and the entering into the heavenly kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The work of Christ upon the Church through the Spirit shows that Christology is the foundation of ecclesiology.

By the liturgical celebration, the Church achieves the spiritual marriage with the Son of God, enters his wedding room and is glorified more than heaven itself. The Church on the earth intimately communicates with and imitates the Church in heaven, thus demonstrating Christ's Resurrection and the victory over the death as well as the fact that there is one heavenly Church that is manifested clearly and effectively wherever Christ is present in the Sacraments, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is called the Body of Christ when all its members from everywhere are united in harmony and share the same Sacraments.

Repentance in the context of the Eucharistic assembly is another important topic discussed by Chrysostom. Repentance protects the Church against all its enemies and gives courage and freedom to its members. If the Christians do not repent of their sins, but they approach the Sacraments, these ones will destroy their miserable souls. This effect occurs not because of the nature of the sacraments, but because of the fact that the beneficiaries are spiritually sick. The Exegete uses again a biblical episode, a prefiguration of the insolent attitude of some people who dare to do so. In the Old Testament, during the wanderings in the wilderness under the leading of Moses, some Israelites were not purified, yet partook of the manna and drank un worthily. But in the New Testament, all the members of the Church are

obliged to repent of their sins, because otherwise, they will have to give explanations in front of the Seat of Christ and receive the punishment of which St. Paul mentions in his letters.

Although the members of Christ's Church are many and different, they are equal in dignity and constitute the fullness of this Church. Like in a human body, each member has his own role, in complementarity with the others. All the roles or functions contribute to the formation and the stability of the whole Church. According to the command of Christ, the Church members must share all the responsibility of building the Church and maintaining its unity through the practice of the virtues, through true love and repentance, as well as through piety, obedience and glory of God. Taking into account the fact that the Church is holy and doesn't allow anybody to interfere in its being, the sin of a member threatens the health of the whole Church. The sick members must be cut from the body of the Church because they can affect the whole Church. The priest, as a member of the Church, is responsible for the cleaning the Church of all the stains. When practiced correctly, the repentance is the only drug that cures a sick member and at the same time the means through which he can be readmitted to the Church. The person who is a healthy member of the Christ's Church, His holy Temple, is himself a holy temple, a dwelling place of the Trinitarian God. That means that his life is an image of the Church.

The Church members are true believers, sons of God, released from the bonds of the sin and the devil, identified with the saints. As long as they were released from the bondage of evil, they possess the ability to defend themselves, strengthening their souls, as Job did, with great patience and self-control. Their firm position against all the adversities gives them the right to sit next to the martyrs and even next to Christ and to enter the Kingdom of heaven by the grace of Jesus Christ and his love for people. The church is seen in every local Church, whose members meet the criteria above. The Church members are obliged to apply what they have learned in their everyday life, because the Church does not end with the completion of a religious service or of the Eucharistic assembly. If they refuse to apply the principles of the Christian living in society, God will banish them from His Kingdom, in the place where the eternal fire never dies. God hears the prayer of a Christian easier in the church, because it is united with the prayers of the priests and the heavenly powers. The prayers of the priests give more power to the prayers of the Christians. Christ hears their joined prayers immediately, for He is present in the Sacraments. Christians are considered to be righteous because they believe in Christ, suffer patiently one for the other and they are the sheep for which Christ shed his blood. They must live a long life, worthy of the name of the People of God, refrain

from envy and have love for one another. If they are infected with the disease of sin, they receive help and healing, bringing together many prayers to Lord.

The soul of a Christian is the iconic representation of the Church when its components – the spirit, the heart / the mind, the consciousness, the thoughts, the faculties (anger and desire) and the will - are all in harmony, centred on Christ, full of humility, repentance and His presence, and not of vices and evil. If one of the parties of the soul is defiled, unbalanced and ceases to be Christocentric, the Church stops being the same with the soul. The soul subject to sin still has a chance to become the image of the Church only if it voluntarily accepts the treatment and the medication of Christ, the Doctor of the souls. The Church, namely every soul of Christian that abounds in virtues, is a vessel under the leadership and guidance of the bishop, who was given its surveillance. The bishop must have a soul that is itself an image of the Church, accomplishing his duties satisfactorily. Otherwise, he causes the sinking of the Church (of the individual soul) under its authority. He will be judged by God according to the way he supervises the Church.

The Church may include only spiritual people who receive the circumcision of the heart, who willingly obey and serve Christ as God, and who obey the divine words given to them from the pulpit of the Church as a source of real food for their little soul. They believe in Christ, straighten their life and shine through the cure of repentance. Chrysostom considers that only those people could be real human beings. In the Church, the Christians receive the grace and peace of God, the forgiveness for their sins and the basic things for their eternal salvation. The Church is made up of vigilant souls, who live in accordance with the Law of God, who are joined together by the bond of love and the living of a righteous life, who have great reverence and the fear of God is deeply rooted in them.

St. John Chrysostom explains that the Church could not exist without the hierarchy through which God is acting for the benefit of the Church. The Son has instituted the priesthood in the Holy Spirit in order to make His presence felt among the people, through the servants, to give them the possibility of attending the Sacraments and to facilitate the communion between them and God. Priesthood is composed of teachers (bishops), priests and deacons, all contributing to building up the Church according to their own capacities, interceding to God in the name of the Church and standing before God's altar every day of the Lord. The clergy is the imperial escort of Christ, empowered by Christ to tie and untie and to implement the sanctions and the canons of the Church to correct the Christians. Chrysostom urges the clerics to avoid the arrogance and to embrace the humility and the fear of God, in order to govern the Church with fairness and to avoid God's anger.

The Son of God, through His Saviour Blood, turned His Church into his Home. The Apostles were the first bishops. The God's House is apostolic because the Apostles are those who have called other people to follow them and taught them, based on the words of Christ, how to behave and perform their duties to please God. St. John Chrysostom, therefore, refers explicitly to the apostolic succession existing in the Church. The supervision and the leading of the Church have been entrusted by the Son of the Apostles and, through the apostles, to the bishops. Not only the bishops but also the priests and the deacons were commissioned to guard the House of God and the great mystery of the economy (oikos, nomos = the law of the house) of this House. Therefore, all must be people with strong characters in order to imitate Christ and to obey the Apostles.

God manages his flock with the help of the bishop whom he personally chooses and ordains. Christ, the Son of God, instructs the bishops how to execute all the tasks properly and successfully as shepherds of His flock. Christ is the Good Shepherd, who all the bishops have to imitate. The Holy Spirit works not only by the Apostles, to take care of the flock, but also by bishops. In turn, the bishop ordains men as priests. He is responsible for all the priests under his supervision and he is responsible for their sins. A bishop should lead the flock with great bravery, tenacity and safety, even if, this means sacrificing his own life. The bishop, who does so, is obedient to the commands of Christ (Jn. 10, 11). He is responsible for each of the flock. He nourishes and protects the flock of the hostile people and the powers of darkness.

God chooses and ordains his commanders (bishops) through His Apostles. He imposes them a strict code of behaviour, so that they would instruct the Church using the teachings of God, would defend it and lead it into the fierce battle against the powers of the devil. Through them, God gives His rich blessings and gives eternal life to the Christian soldiers. These commanders are ultimately responsible in front of God and, therefore, they must perform their duties accurately and conscientiously and to maintain the unity and the harmony in the Army. The most important thing for the integrity of the Church is the close identification between the person of the bishop and the Person of Christ. The bishop stands out as the image of Christ, and therefore, as the image of the Church. Thus, the Church of God exists in a particular locality only when it is under the authority and the direction of a bishop who has the God's power to form and lead such a community.

The bishops act as physicians who maintain the health and the unity of the body, by preaching the Gospel, by proclaiming the true and correct kerygma and by the ordination of the Orthodox clergy. The bishop must be the most powerful member of the Body because he

represents Christ as the head. He must be experienced in the interpretation of the Scripture and the dogmas of the Church to counter the heretical and schismatic attacks in the ecclesial body that put in danger its unity. Otherwise, he will suffer eternal punishment for any damage to the Body.

Compared to Christ, the local bishop plays a vital role in the Church, since he is the image of Christ as the contender of the bride. The relationship of the bishop with the Church reflects the great mystery of the marriage between the Son and His Bride. The bishop is so important that the Universal Church is represented in every Orthodox bishop anywhere, canonically ordained.

Returning to the ecclesiastical matters he talks about in his homilies, it is evident that St. John has resumed and interiorized Pauline thought, expressed on several occasions in his great epistles and letters from captivity that are assigned to him. St. John circumscribes the problem of the Church unity in comparison to Pauline reflections from 1 Corinthians 1 and Ephesians 4, conveying pastoral exhortations to the faithful in Antioch in order to preserve the spirit of unity. The Church is presented as a living and inseparable organism, full of charisma and different gifts that allow mutual service, in love.

It can be said that the result is a biblical theology that opens onto an accurate, ecclesial unity, although embryonic and summarized, but targeting the speedy and concrete application of some principles against the painful divisions, sparked by the Arian crisis and by the egos of some of the Church leaders. The reasons, whether doctrinal or political, affects the Christian community in the same way.

For St. John, Christ is the Head of His Body. The body is complete if it has the head and the head completes the body. This fullness he speaks about is made up of the body and the head together. The body is made up of members or limbs, and needs them all. Thus, Christ needs all the believers. All contribute to the integrity of the Mystical Body. The body is full and complete only when all are united in the same whole.³⁵

There are more honourable members, but they are not necessarily clergy. In the Homily *In sanctum Romanum martyrem*, the exegete says that the martyrs are crowned head, in the sense of members of the Church leaders, and the rest of the Christians are the legs.³⁶ For Chrysostom, the primacy in the Church belongs not to the most distinguished by wealth or functions, but to the virtuous people, who are honoured by all the others, the degree of holiness is ultimately the only criterion of ranking the members of the Body of Christ.

³⁵ *Homilies on Ephesians* 3, 2. *Homilies on I Corinthians*, 8, 4.

³⁶ *In Sanctum Romanum Martyrium* 1, pp 50, 605.

Offering a brief exegesis of the term μέλη καὶ μέρους, Chrysostom shows that all the Church, spread throughout the world, is one body, and each Christian is a member of this body. The idea is not an original one. In the early Church, the catholicity was an important aspect of the ecclesiology. At the St. Mass it is often said that the bread, made of wheat grains, symbolizes the Church. The Didache 9, 4 states: "As *this broken bread* was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered became one, so should gather Your Church from the ends of the earth into Your Kingdom." St. John Chrysostom notes that each member of the local community is part of the Great Church. He understands the psychological need of every person to be affiliated to a larger group. This should unite them, pacify them, and not cause fights. Then he points out that the members of all churches should accept each other (εἰρηνεύεται) in this catholicity.

The first thought, that St. John Chrysostom sends, seems to be the unity of all the Christians. The divisions and the quarrels may come to an end only through the harmony of the ecclesial body. In his homilies, unlike *The Treaty on the Priesthood*, he puts less emphasis on obedience or submission, and focuses more on the responsibility of all to achieve this harmony. According to him, every Christian has received the gift of the Holy Spirit in the day of the baptism. This gift has the power of transforming, just as it happened with the Apostle Peter at Pentecost. The charisms of the early Church were still present and widespread in the Church.

If we were to compare *The Treaty on the Priesthood* with *The Homilies* of St. John Chrysostom we are, partly due to the unsystematic character of his thinking, in front of a variety of contradictory accents from the ecclesiological point of view. We have on one hand, the complementarity between all the members of the body, and on the other hand, the almost exclusive responsibility of the clergy (especially of the bishop), beneficiaries of the various gifts of the Spirit. We have to take into consideration this ambivalence, especially when dealing with the specific ideas of St. John about priesthood.

The Treaty on the Priesthood favours a storied concept of the Church. In the plan of the religious service, the hierarchy is superior to the lay faithful. The holders of the priestly ministry are, or at least should be, holier from the moral point of view, superior in virtues, in responsibilities, as well as in the power to fulfil them. This tends to occult the ecclesial fraternity and the equal dignity of the baptized, as it is reflected in the New Testament. Not only that the episcopal function is exalted, but the person of the bishop is praised, too. The superiors are made responsible for all before God, but not in front of the brothers into faith, who do not have to give explanations for their own deeds. As such, despite the obvious

enthusiasm with which St. John Chrysostom presents the episcopal duties in “*About priesthood*”, in his homilies, we can notice, however, that he is launching several calls to the believers’ discernment regarding the actions and the teachings of their pastors. Even the “little ones” can rebuke the “big ones”. Unlike the hierarchical (storied) conception about the Church, in the homilies of St. John Chrysostom we get familiarized with an organic understanding of the relationships between the members of the body, focused on their diversity and interdependence³⁷. In Homily 34 on the Epistle to Hebrew, St. John Chrysostom mentions that, in terms of faith, the obedience to the superior no longer applies in the situation when this one has strayed from the truth of the Scripture³⁸.

The fundamental role of the Church is to restore the communion between people. In the large cities, such as Antioch or Constantinople, the social stratification, the entertainment offer, the primacy of the individual interests and the own turmoil of the commercial cities made this solidarity fade.

At St. John Chrysostom, the Church life has nothing to do with the ecclesial understanding, which is static, one-sided and oriented towards institution, scholar understanding, but he sees the being of the Church in the dialogue between God and man, between man and man, between priest and faithful, between Church and society. In his view, the Church can fulfil its mission only if it remains in a continuous dialogue with the word of the Scripture.

Chrysostom's ecclesiology is dominated by two strong ideas: the truth and the unity. The truth is the characteristic corresponding to the Christian Revelation, and this is the manifestation of the one God. The truth is the value par excellence that has to shine, on the condition of being protected against any errors. The unity is the hallmark of the divine and therefore it must characterize the Church and the people who make it up, people who may actually cause this truth unanimously³⁹. The programmatic “opening” bears the risk of losing the self, among the words of the others, uprooted from the shell of the revealed truth, long time ago.

St. John Chrysostom's ecclesiology is alive, experimental, biblical realistic and liturgical and sacramental, especially Eucharistic. In its work, the Church wants to integrate,

³⁷ We recommend the doctoral work of Cezar Păvălașcu, *The Human community and the ecclesial communion in the view of St. John Chrysostom*, held at the University of Bucharest.

³⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrew 34*, translated into Romanian p. 384: “Listen to your rulers and obey to them.” But you say: And when they are bad, should we obey to them? When it comes to faith, then run and go away from him, even if he would be not only man, but an angel fallen from heaven, and if it's about his life, do not closely search.”

³⁹ Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland & Ghislain Lafont, *Imagining the Catholic Church: Structured Communion in the Spirit*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2000, p. 38, available online at http://www.amazon.com/Imagining-Catholic-Church-Structured-Communion/dp/0814659462/ref=la_B001JS7P32_1_3? s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1421945870&sr=1-3.

through the divine mysteries, all the people in the Mystical Body of the Lord, in a process that repeats the one of the Incarnation. The literary and pastoral activity of St. John reflects, sometimes dramatically, the continuous effort, sprinkled by many disappointments, to cope the storms that have fallen upon the Church. Rooted in Pauline theology, the ecclesial unity must remain a solid acquisition for the benefit of the ecclesial communities later on.

The VIIth Chapter of the thesis, "The Mysteriology or the Sacraments of the Church" develops St. John Chrysostom's concept about the five Sacraments: the Baptism, the Eucharist, the Confession, the Matrimony and the Priesthood. In the first chapter, dedicated to the Sacrament of Baptism, we treated the sacramental understanding of the Baptism, as well as the soteriological and sacramental implications of the Baptism of Christ. The basic ideas from the chrysostomian mysteriology are the ones regarding the gift of adoption, bestowed by Baptism and the restoration of the divinely into Christian. Regarding the St. Communion, I was concerned to answer certain questions that appear quite frequently in the theological debates: what was St. John thinking of transubstantiation and epiclesis? A conclusion of the homiletic exhortations towards a constant research of the conscience and an approach to the chalice is that we cannot live forever otherwise than eating and drinking constantly from the Spring of the eternity, namely by partaking of the Body and the Blood of Christ the Savior. The fellowship at the "Bread of life", at the life-giving body, means to unite with Christ and partake of God's eternal life. Stressing the soteriological and the sacramental meanings of our participation to Eucharist, Chrysostom ascribes the following words to God:

"I wanted to be your brother out of love for you; I took your flesh and blood so that they would be common among you. I give you this body and this blood through which I've become of the same nature with you. He gave all this flesh to share, so that feeding on him, and putting away the previous death from us, to interfere with him, through this holy mass, and to enter this eternal and immortal life"⁴⁰.

In Baptism, we have been forgiven the sins and we have received the adoption. The image of God was renewed and the divine filiation was restored. This communion is offered as a result of Christ's saving death and it is updated by our participation in the Eucharist. Christ gives us the privilege of being united with Him and partaking of His Body in the Eucharist. As the "Bread of life" He gives us the opportunity to share in the divine life, because God is the Word. By uniting with the eternal Son, we can enjoy of Father's adoption.

⁴⁰ Idem, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* 24, 2, P 61, 200, Romanian translation, p. 323.

The exegete shows also how the Eucharist "does" the Church, by incorporating the people in the Body of Christ. He develops in the listeners a sense of the sacred, using a tone of tenderness towards the person of Christ: Whom the angels regard shaking with emotion, or rather they do not dare to look at Him because of the glare He spreads, He is the Same One that gives us food, mingles with us and with Whom we'll become one body.

We are approaching of the Eucharistic Christ in a state of cleanliness that is reacquired by the Sacrament of Penance. The true repentance is the change of mind for the own actions, a change of the moral life, a change for good, a total denial of the previous life and of the sin, a strong desire to practice the virtues, a perfect unification of the own desires with the divine will. Therefore, the repentance is man's moral rebirth and the starting point for a new and virtuous life. A true fulfilment of the commandments cannot be made only for Christ's sake. The discovery of the Kingdom of Heaven [Repent, that the Kingdom of Heaven has got closer (Matthew 4, 17)] inside the man with the help of God and His priests is the only impulse that inspires us to a virtuous life of repentance.

St. John Chrysostom insisted upon the spiritual discernment and in his letter to Theodore, declares that "the value of the repentance isn't judged by the amount of time, but by the mood of the soul"⁴¹. It may even have the efficacy that the preaching of Jonah to Nineveh had, when "one day was enough to make them get rid of evil"⁴².

Although he hasn't left us more treaties dedicated exclusively to the Christian family life, we find, in many homilies of St. John, detailed instructions and abundant practical details for the family life. This spiritual and practical guidance of the family presents St. John Chrysostom to be not only a pastor of souls, but also a connoisseur of the intimacy of the family home, full of hope about the Christian family vocation. Throughout his homiletic activity that was born out of a profound pastoral love, we are able to perceive his vision regarding the true Christian family. In fact, his writings convey his profound vision on the spiritual potential of marriage, based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. His teachings have applicability for both the monastic life and for the family life. The Holy Father did not see a great gap between the monastery and the Christian home and he found nothing contradictory in the powerful promotion of the life of celibacy, offering, simultaneously, encouragement and practical guidance for the married Christians. He constantly called them to live the Christian asceticism, giving them relevant and practical advice for everyday life, this asceticism having the ability to ascend them to great spiritual heights.

⁴¹ Idem, *Paraenesis sive ad Theodorum adhortatio lapsum*, 1, PG, 47, 284 D.

⁴² Ibid., 285 A.

Making a synthesis of those presented above, we find that St. John Chrysostom's thinking about the place of the priesthood in the Church is dominated by a series of tensions. There are tensions between two worlds, facing on many levels: on the one hand the political philosophy around makes him say, for the good of the Christian citadel, a clear distinction between rulers and subjects; on the other hand, his attention to the Pauline writings determines him to value the Christian fraternity and to minimize the inequalities among the baptized, regardless of their contribution to the life of the Church.

In general, these two poles seem to be materialized on one hand in the project of the priestly and religious reform presented in the treaty *On the Priesthood*, and on the other hand, in the homilies, some of which are strongly influenced by St. Paul, emphasizing the responsibility of all and the complementarity of roles. Obviously, the huge number of works belonging to St. John Chrysostom does not allow us to support this strict dichotomy between the two "corpus", even between the two eras in the life of this prolific exegete. However, we have to notice that there are missing from the treaty *On the Priesthood* several elements of ecclesiological balance which, however, we encounter in his homilies.

The exaltation of the priesthood, with which we are introduced in the Treaty, either it pursues a reform or simply is an expression of the respect in front of the greatness of the priest's work. But it is about to lead to a symmetrical disqualification of the other believers, placing them in an absolute dependence towards the saving work of the clerical superiors. It places the latter ones not only vis-à-vis of the laity, but essentially "above" and "beyond" the common condition of the members of Christ's body. Προεστώτες are strongly linked to Ecclesia, but their primacy is about to turn from prominence into superiority.

Different fragments quoted in this chapter reflect the leading role of the clergy. Apart from a few passages from the Liturgy, the articulation of the ecclesial body seems already to be unbalanced. Certainly, the priests are not isolated from the Church, but they are better, their contribution is qualitatively different from all the others. They are the soul in the body, even the head, that's why they must become more holy than the others. Alone, they act "for the benefit of all", and not in a shared responsibility for the Church and its mission in the world; they are more responsible than others, "for" the others. Everything derives from the strength that comes from Christ, according to which they can be attributed the spiritual fatherhood (cf. *On the Priesthood* 5, 4, 3, 6)⁴³. They should be humble and devoted to the

⁴³ This theme is also present in the homilies. In *Homilies on Matthew* 50, 3, translated into Rom. PSB 23, p. 582-583 we read: "As when you are baptized, you're not baptized by the priest, but God is the one who holds your head with unseen power; and nor angel, nor archangel, nor anyone else dares to approach and touch you, so far. When God is born through the bath of baptism, the gift is only His. Don't you see that here on earth those who adopt someone don't allow their servants to do acts of adoption, but they themselves go to court? In the same way God didn't allow the Angels to make us this gift, but

performance of their duties, pure and holy to be approved by God, so that their mediation to be effective.

However, even at this point, St. John Chrysostom's opinion seems to oscillate. If in the *Treaty on the Priesthood*, he presents the purity of the priest as a saving request in other situations he relativizes it, without renouncing to claim it. The perspective on the sacramental efficacy varies from one case to another. The minister or the priest is only a symbol, because there is God who makes everything.

However, the attention of the "sacrament of provider" does not mask the ecclesial dimension of the act committed? We have just simply noted that the emphasis on strength tends to isolate the priest of Ecclesia. But to St. John Chrysostom, this power must be well understood: it is linked to a task which is to be accomplished and not as arbitrariness (Eigenmächtigkeit) or as an absolute power ("unumschränkter Gewalt")⁴⁴. Only to the extent that the law remains faithful to Evangelical priest, he must be obeyed. We can speak of the "representation" of Christ by the priest in his works in accordance with the of the Lord's teachings, but not in his own person. The authority with which it is invested is regulated not only through an ethics or ethics function, but by faithful discernment. In a charismatic perspective, strictly belongs to St. John Chrysostom, each priest should be judged by its contribution to the building of the Church. Later, we will witness the sliding toward a formal justification for the authority, the authority that comes from the archbishop.⁴⁵

The binom "priest model/other imitators Christians" pervades the pages of the treaty *On the Priesthood*, favoured in its turn by the platonic ethos. A form of exemplarity penetrates the priest St. John Chrysostom discourse, but also of the Holly Fathers and other Saints. First expressed as a requirement, especially for the assumed mission (a priest must be a Saint), this ideal of Holiness receives and theological justifications: already at the Origen, the best – he Saints, who are not necessarily priests - always take upon themselves their inferiors sins (cf. Homilies at Numbers 10, 1). The religious writer sees the Church as a mediator of the divine accomplishment. The Holiness of the Church takes shape through a mixture between the charisma of the Holiness and that of Ministry. The Ordination makes the priest a Saint, not for

He Himself is present, commanding and saying, "And father of your do not call yourself on earth" (Mt. 23: 9). Christ never said those words to despise the parents, but, before all these, to prefer your Creator, the One who has enrolled among His children."

⁴⁴ See the meaning of the *αὐθεντία* term in the Chrysostomos m. Ritter, Charisma, p. 117, note 49. Her comment at p. 120, the following passage from Ephesians Sermons at 11, 5: "We are not masters of your faith, you have absolute no ordering as well as tyrannies, but cherished; We're just proposed to the Ministry of the word, and not invest outside power; we fulfil the function of counsellors who persuade, not magistrates who arrest people".

⁴⁵ Alain Flaubert, "All "," One "," Some ". *The Presidency, Expression of the interdependence between pastors and Ecclesia*, Phd Thesis, The University of Laval, Québec and The Catholic Institute Paris, 2010, p. 262-263.

himself, but also for the others⁴⁶. It imposes a moral ethics of clerical exemplarity, which is already present in his Rhet. 2 of Gregory of Nazianzus, in accordance with the axiom that unworthy causes loss of the entire body. The bad example of leaders is fateful. (see also *Constitutions of the Apostles* 2, 10, 2). Logically, you have to be holier than the others in order to raise them. But is it necessary to be a Saint to convey the Holy things? St. Gregory suggests so, and *On the Priesthood of Chrysostom*'s is explicit in this regard (cf. Rhet. 2.71; *About the Priesthood*, 6 2). With regard to the Apostolic Constitutions, they stipulate about the priest to be faithful to God and fearful as his prayer to be effective (Chapter 7, 44).

In this context, it is to be understood the insistence on Priest as a person, rather than his Ministry. The exemplarity of priesthood comes first: he is ordained to be an example for the others, because the ordination exposes him to all⁴⁷.

We have to accept that a strategic reform favoured in the fourth century by state authorities against the drift that has undergone Church in valuing the priestly ministry and the individual priest: the salvation of the body passes through the head. This attempt to reform materializes, even at the risk of a passion of its leaders and a quasi symmetric disqualification of other believers. Evangelical and neo-testamentary calls addressed to all are reinterpreted in favour of an ideal of holiness reserved only for some (see the use in *On the Priesthood* 5.12 vs. Mathew. 6, 4). In Homilies on St. John Chrysostom reveal the existence of a second strategy, which comes in tension with the Treaty about priest, valuing the baptismal responsibility. This is about the salvation of the body, using the work of all limbs.

Should we say that we are witnessing a devaluation of the baptized who are not priests? They are travelling on a ship headed by clergy (Ch. 2, 57). Priests are responsible for believers (*On the Priesthood* 6, 11). Thus, the latter shouldn't be more concerned about themselves? In St. Gregory's approach, freedom and intelligence of the "lambs" seem to oppose pastoral activity (cf. *Rhetoricians*. 2, 19). Chrysostom says that in what the ordinations are concerned, the Bishop should be able to act freely, without taking into account the unanimous opinion of believers (*On the Priesthood* 3.11). The social context imposed solutions that could keep the shelter appetites church functions profiteers.

⁴⁶ Certain passages in Homilies on St. John make us understand that ordination does not contribute to the holiness of the priest Parson; See Homilies on Ephesians 11: 1-2; Homilies on 2 Thessalonians 4: 4.

⁴⁷ *On the Priesthood* 3, 10, p. 93: "It is not possible that the sins of priests to remain hidden. On the contrary, sins even the smallest sins, come out to light quickly. An athlete, as long as stays inside and does not fight with anyone is able to hide the weaknesses. The same things happen with the people leading this lonely life, living apart from the cares of the world, they own the loneliness like a curtain that cover their sins; but when taken in the world are forced to undress their tranquillity and solitude like a garment, and to reveal all their empty souls, by moving their bodies. As their good deeds were useful to many believers, because the facts urge them to good deeds, so their sins made them more sluggish for committing virtue and more indolent for the painstaking of good deeds".

More importantly, there seems to be even a change in the meaning of baptism. Is it understood that the lighting that provides a life consistent with that of Christ (Rom. 6: 4)? The pursuit of deification emphasis on salvation through knowledge, risking to make it a mystery that only the most erudite scholars (the clergy) possess and reveal it.

As a general approach, I have noticed that the terminology related to the management is to decide on the superiority of the church leaders (Rhet. 2, 11.15; *On the Priesthood* 6, 4) or the role of the leaders in front of the tended (cf. Rhet. 2, 3; Rhet. 32, 11). Its use in the liturgical context, nevertheless, keeps the size of the routing of a concerted action (Rhet. 2, 111). Even if St. John Chrysostom uses the idea of superiority linked to liturgical presiding (especially in the treaty *On the Priesthood*), his homilies present his approach as being one of coordinating the joint action, which is not limited to the liturgical space. Management is, to him, an expression of the Church's life charisma of local administration. The pastoral the priestly register dominate this ecclesiastical space.

The exaltation of the priest, obviously noticeable in *On the Priesthood*, has the effect of pulling him up over all the other believers. If the Church does not weaken, the emphasis on the primacy of the priest makes it the model to be emulated. The idea of reciprocity, actually, loses its meaning that is the servant shall be persuaded by the others in order to improve his own moral state, according to an organic understanding of the work of the Church. The insistence on the responsibility of the priest, as eminent as difficult, tends to focus on the power that holds the moral perfection necessary to effectively exercise their ministry. But all these facts isolate him from the Church: if he is still among the people of God, is the priest working with other followers of Christ?

But we cannot minimize the environment that favoured such a discourse: the need for reform of the Church and a platonic ethos offering solutions. Renewal must begin with the head that all other members depend almost entirely. We can argue that Chrysostom make exception to this trend in his homilies at least, where they keep their attachment to the Holy Scriptures, especially the epistles of St. Paul. This fact led him to valuing everyone's responsibility and it has sheltered during his episcopal ministry, by the neo-Platonic thinking that was in vogue at the time. However, his treaty *On the Priesthood* and St. Gregory's *Rhetorics* 2 represents excellent sources of arguments and relevant proofs to the assertion of clerical responsibility and authority in the relationship with other submissive and dependent believers.

After a variety of theological ideas presented in the pages of the paper, the conclusion that emerges is that the theological Chrysostom thought has its basis on the scriptural

approach, the interpreter especially using the books of the Old Testament and Genesis, the Leviticus, The Deuteronom, The Ecclesiastes, the prophets Ezekiel, Amos, The Song Solomon, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, The Psalms of David, The Solomon's Proverbs, and the New Testament Gospels, the Pauline epistles, Epistle 1 Peter and The Acts. Most of the ideas are not found in the homilies of Chrysostom's own creation. However, the originality and the timeliness lie in the message that it conveys. His erudition, of the delicacy of the exegetical analysis and the penetration of the unique meanings of biblical passages helps him in achieving a theological synthesis and dissemination of Scripture that just a few Fathers of the Church have managed to achieve.

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I believe that the ideas revealed in this paper show that St. John Chrysostom is always present, and this is why his exegetical works have been translated into a lot of languages. The great *Corpus* has been preserved throughout these centuries, because of the relevance of St. John Chrysostom, which transcends the 4th century from Antioch and Constantinople. As for Whom He has served a lifetime, Jesus Christ, St. John remains a steadfast authority, born of experience and enlightenment.

St. John Chrysostom is not a scientific reading of the New Testament. He reads the New Testament with the eyes of piety, without ever thinking to read it scientifically, as it is done today, for instance, in the Protestant theological schools. The study of theology is for the Holy Father a problem of faith, not science. On the contrary, the Protestants' approach on theology is as a science, as in mathematics. They study the holy books as studying Botany and Chemistry. St. John does not dare to touch any letter of the sacred text. He only apologizes God that he is coming closer to divinity with the eyes opened.

The exegesis that he makes on the sacred text is far from how it is done today within the Protestant theology schools, which put God under a microscope to section Him, to cut Him, or to hull His words. Here, the object of my piety is stripped, naked, put on trial as a body on a dissecting table. St. John Chrysostom, however, would never dare to correct a single word, not even a mistake of transcription of the Gospel, because the Gospel is a kind of new incarnation of Christ in words. It is the same word of Christ, approached with fear and frightfulness.⁴⁸

Even if he died in 407, St. John Chrysostom continues “to speak” even louder today than in the fourth century. Not everyone will want to listen, as not everyone wanted to hear then and therefore he has enemies today, just as it was then. But those who let themselves be guided by the spirit of humility will find in him a gifted interlocutor, and there will be a landmark in his writings, in these confusing times. St. John Chrysostom radiates among the Fathers of the Church as a great defender of the doctrine of the Christian faith and as an educator for the knowledge of God. Joining his teaching has produced countless saints in the Church both spiritually born in the monastery and in the homes of Christians married. The same can produce fruits of faith today.

⁴⁸ Virgil Gheorghiu, *The Temptation of Freedom. Memories II, 100 + 1* Grammar Publishing, Bucharest, 2002, p. 270.

