

MEMORIAL OF SAINT PETER CHRYSOLOGUS, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
LA CROSSE
JULY 30, 2012

First Reading: *Jer* 13:1-11
Responsorial Psalm: *Dt* 32:18-19, 20, 21
Gospel: *Mt* 13:31-35

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

Forgetfulness of God, stubborn failure to listen to the voice of God, and the service of false gods alienate man from his own deepest being and, therefore, lead to his corruption and eventual self-destruction. God created man as His intimate co-worker in the world. God created man to be as close to Him as a loincloth is to a man's flesh. When man drifts away from God and rejects God's commandments, he becomes unhappy and lost, he becomes "rotted, good for nothing,"¹ like the Prophet Jeremiah's loincloth removed from his body and hidden in the cleft of the rock by the River Parath. When we forget our origin in the immeasurable and unceasing love of God for us, and also our destiny in His loving presence for all eternity, we become foolish, proudly rebelling against God's law, and vainly worshipping the false idols of money, pleasure, power, and pagan religions.²

The truth is that we find our true and lasting happiness by giving our hearts completely into the Heart of God incarnate in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We only find direction and happiness in our lives by making our hearts one with the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus. Only when we rest our hearts in the Heart of Jesus can they be purified of the sins of pride and rebellion, and be fortified with His pure and selfless love.

Our Lord uses parables to help us to grow in our knowledge of the great truth of His love for us and to help us to grow in our response of love for love. The parable is the ideal form to use in teaching mysteries which ultimately lie beyond our ability to comprehend, for the parable invites continual reflection upon the mystery, leading to an always deeper knowledge and appreciation of the mystery. The Gospel, quoting Psalm 78 [77], declared the providential role of the parable in Our Lord's teaching: "*I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.*"³

¹ *Jer* 13:7.

² Cf. *Dt* 32:18 and 21.

³ *Mt* 13:35. Cf. *Ps* 78 [77]:2.

In today's Gospel, Our Lord uses two parables, "The Parable of the Mustard Seed," and "The Parable of the Leaven," to teach us about the mystery of God's love for us in the Church. He tells us that God's love for us in the Church is like "a mustard seed," which is the "smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants."⁴ He also tells us that God's love for us in the Church is like "yeast" of which a small quantity is able to make leaven a large amount of dough.⁵ The images of the mustard seed and of yeast invite us to trust in the power of God's love for us as He dwells with us in the Church to provide a home for all men and to transform their lives more and more into the likeness of His only-begotten Son Whom He sent in our human flesh to free us from sin, to free us for love of Him and of our neighbor.

Both images also invite us to understand that our trust in Divine Providence, our confidence in the never-failing help of God's grace, necessarily means also our complete cooperation with divine grace, dying to self, as the seed dies in the ground, in order to offer our life for Christ and for the multitude whom He desires to save, and losing ourselves, as the yeast loses itself in the dough, in the work of permeating the whole world with the truth and love of Christ our Savior.

If we view the history of the Church down the Christian centuries and view the situation of the Church in our own time, we see so many threats to her life, both from without and even more sadly from within. If Christ were not dwelling with us in the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we would most reasonably lose hope for the future of the Church and her mission. But, with Christ, we most reasonably dare to trust that what may appear to be a small seed liable to destruction will, by God's grace, become always the "largest of plants" in which the many birds can come to dwell.⁶ What seems to be a small bit of yeast liable to corruption will, by God's grace, transform the whole world. It only remains for us to cooperate with the divine grace at work in the Church for the salvation of all, for the salvation of the world.

Today, we celebrate the memory of Saint Peter Chrysologus, Archbishop of Ravenna from 433 to 450, an heroic servant of the pastoral charity of Christ at work in the Church through His Bishops and their co-workers, the priests. In his service of Archbishop, he was called from the very beginning to face the gravest difficulties in the Church, especially heresy regarding the two natures, human and divine, in the one divine person of Christ, with trust in Christ's promise: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

⁴ *Mt* 13:31-32.

⁵ *Mt* 13:33.

⁶ *Mt* 13:32.

Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”⁷ One of his biographers tells us:

When he entered on his charge he found large remains of paganism in his diocese, and abuses had crept in among the faithful; the total extirpation of the one and the reformation of the other were the fruit of his labors.⁸

Facing a most difficult situation for the Church, Saint Peter Chrysologus devoted himself, above all, to teaching the truth of the faith, especially through his sermons.

His biographer also informs us about the principal content of his preaching: “In his sermons he strongly recommends frequent communion, that the Eucharist, the body of Christ, may be the daily bread of our souls.”⁹ It is, in fact, from the sermons of Saint Peter Chrysologus that we learn about his life of tireless service of the flock at Ravenna. His name Chrysologus refers to the “golden” quality of his teaching because of its fidelity to the word of Christ. Pope Benedict XIII named him a doctor of the Church in 1729.

Studying the life of Saint Peter Chrysologus, one can only admire and hope to emulate his trust that the word of Christ converts hearts to Him and transforms the world in accord with God’s law. One is also led to reflect on how such trust in the power of sound doctrine is needed by Bishops and priests in our time.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a privileged place in which to contemplate through the eyes of the Virgin Mary the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, the Mystery of Faith, the Mystery of God’s immeasurable and unceasing love at work for us in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Here, Our Lady of Guadalupe draws our hearts to her heart, so that she may direct us, with maternal love, to give our hearts, one with her Immaculate Heart, completely into the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, her Divine Son. Here, Our Lady of Guadalupe teaches us the obedience to God’s will, the ever attentive listening to His voice, and the abandon of false idols which are the way to our happiness and peace, already during our earthly pilgrimage, and finally and perfectly at the destination of our pilgrimage, the Kingdom of Heaven.

As the Board of Directors of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe meets today, let us pray, in a special way, that each member and the entire Board will be dedicated anew to serving Our

⁷ *Mt* 28:19-20.

⁸ Herbert Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater, eds., *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*, Complete Edition, New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1956, Vol. IV, p. 485.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 486.

Lady of Guadalupe and, with her, serving her Divine Son in His work of saving souls, of transforming the world until the Last Day, the Day of His Coming in Glory. Let us pray that, through the labors of the Board of Directors, the Shrine will always remain true to its noble mission as a sanctuary to which the faithful come on pilgrimage, in order to obtain the grace to live faithfully in Christ in the Church, each day, for love of God and of their neighbor.

Let us now lift up our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus opened for us in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Let us lift up to the Heart of Jesus all of the intentions of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and above all the intention of the fidelity of the Shrine to its high mission. In the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, as Saint Peter Chrysologus so wonderfully teaches us, our hearts will be healed of the forgetfulness of God and of the rebellion against His law. They will be inflamed with Divine Love, so that the tiny seed of the Church may become always “the largest of plants” in which all men will find a place of rest and peace, so that the yeast of Christ’s truth and love may permeate and transform the whole world.

Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who trust in Thee, have mercy on us!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us!

Saint Peter Chrysologus, pray for us!

Saint Juan Diego, pray for us!

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE