The Faithful's Priestly Service and Sacrifice in St. Peter Chrysologus

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St. Peter Chrysologus, fifth century bishop of Ravenna and Doctor of the Church, extended an earlier Patristic tradition which affirmed the laity's participation in the priestly sacrifice and service of Christ. The first part of this paper briefly reviews the earlier Patristic tradition, including (1) initiation into the common priesthood of Christ; (2) Old Testament priestly models for the lay faithful; and (3) modes of participation in the priesthood of Christ. As the Church Fathers sought to explicate these aspects of the mystery of the common priesthood of all the baptized, they built on the truths found in Scripture, especially 1 Pt 2:5,9. As described in the second part of this paper, both Scripture and Tradition informed St. Peter Chrysologus' understanding of these truths. The second part begins with a brief background on the fifth century bishop, followed by an analysis of his Sermons 108 and 109, on Rom 12:1, in which St. Peter Chrysologus urges his congregation to mold their lives in priestly imitation of Christ.

I. Review of Earlier Patristic Tradition

1. Baptism: Initiation into the Royal Priesthood

From the beginning Christians received Baptism to become members of the Church, fulfilling Jesus' final command in Mt 28:19. From at least the second century, Baptism included not only a washing with water, but an anointing with oil; the water symbolizing a rebirth from sin, the oil symbolizing an initiation into the royal priesthood of Christ. For instance, Tertullian (d.212) in *On Baptism* 7 reports:

> After that we come up from the washing and are anointed with the blessed unction, following that ancient practice by which, ever since Aaron was anointed by Moses, there was a custom of anointing them for priesthood with oil out of a horn. That is why the high priest is called a 'christ', from 'chrism' which is the Greek for 'anointing': and from this also our Lord obtained his title, though it had become a spiritual anointing, in that he was anointed with the Spirit by God the Father[1]

The clear statement of this priestly calling in 1 Pt 2:5,9, with reference to Ex 19:6, formed the Scriptural basis for the Patristic understanding of the priestly participation by the lay faithful. Origen (d. 254) makes a direct connection between the anointing of the newly baptized and 1 Pt 2:9 in his *Homilies on Leviticus,* 9.9(3): "For all who have been anointed with the chrism of the sacred anointing have

[1] Tertullian, *On Baptism,* trans. Ernest Evans (Cambridge: University Printing House, 1964), 17, accessed 24 March 2015, http://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_bapt/evans_bapt_text_trans.htm

become priests, just as Peter also says to all the Church, *But you are an elected race, a royal priesthood, a holy people*."[2]

Baptism into the royal priesthood was a Baptism into priestly service. Using the analogy with military service, the Church Fathers often described Baptism as the entrance into a life of Christian service in love. In his address *To the Martyrs* 3, Tertullian emphasized that by Baptism all Christians have taken a *sacramentum*, or military oath, to serve Christ.[3]

Maintaining the earlier tradition, Augustine (d. 430) also locates the priestly initiation of ordinary Christians in baptism through their anointing into a *royal priesthood*. Echoing Tertullian, Augustine writes in *The City of God*, XVII.4: "In truth we can rightly say that all who have been anointed with the oil of Christ are his anointed…"[4] However, more than any prior theologian, Augustine emphasized the *dominicus* character, an indelible mark, impressed on all Christians at Baptism.[5] Extending the military imagery inherited from Tertullian, Augustine referred to Christians as soldiers who not only swore the sacred oath (*sacramentum*), but who by that oath are marked indelibly with the mark of Christ, as soldiers were marked with a tattoo indicating the king to whom they owed allegiance. For example in Epistle 185 written to the general Boniface, Augustine uses the military analogy against the Donatists and their custom of rebaptism. Once given, the mark of Baptism is permanent, just as the mark of a soldier is permanent. Even if one should desert, "the mark...is not cancelled."[6] (Epistle 185.23)

2. Old Testament Models for the Baptized

Once baptized into the holy priesthood, Christians are expected to lead lives of service and sacrifice. The Church Fathers frequently turned to Old Testament figures as priestly models for faithful Christians. In "Patristic Teaching on the Priesthood of the Faithful,"[7] Laurence Ryan traced the Patristic understanding of the priesthood of all baptized. Ryan suggests that from the second century, the Church Fathers interpreted 1 Pt 2:5 as implying a common unifying priesthood of all Christians, asserting that in Patristic authors, "The Aaronic priesthood is the type of all future priests, of those who are sanctified and of all who are anointed with the Holy Ghost. He is the type of Christian, all of whom possess the priesthood attributed to them by St. Peter."[8] Ryan details numerous Patristic authors from

[2] Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16,* Fathers of the Church 83, trans. Gary Barkley (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1990), 196.
[3] Tertullian, *To the Martyrs,* Father of the Church 40, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1959), 22.
[4] Augustine, *City of God,* Works of St. Augustine I/7, trans. William Babcock (New York: New City Press, 2013), 248.
[5] See William Harmless, "Baptism," in *Augustine Through the Ages, An Encyclopedia,* ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 84-91.
[6] Augustine, "Epistle 185," Works of St. Augustine II/3, trans. Roland Teske (New York: New City Press, 2004), 193.
[7] See Laurence Ryan, "Patristic Teaching on the Priesthood of the Faithful," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 29 (1962) 1 Jan 1962: 25-51.
[8] Ryan, "Patristic Teaching on the Priesthood of the Faithful," 30.

the second into the fifth century, Greek and Latin, to support the Aaronic priesthood as the model for all Christians.

Another Old Testament type favored by Patristic authors was Abel, first priest and martyr. Connecting Abel with righteous sacrifice and martyrdom, the Church Fathers saw him pre-figuring Christ as well as providing a powerful model for the priestly sacrifice of the faithful. St. Cyprian (d. 253), writing to the persecuted Christian community in Thibaris, encourages them with: "Let us, beloved brethren, imitate righteous Abel, who initiated martyrdom, he first being slain for righteousness sake."[9] (Epistle LV.5) St. Cyprian combined the image of the sacrificing martyr with that of a soldier performing his duty. Also from the letter to Thibaris, we find the bishop of Carthage exhorting the Catholic community to accept martyrdom as soldiers of Christ, *milites Christi* (Epistle LV.1, 3, 11).

By contrast, Cain was presented as the selfish, worldly and unworthy priest.[10] For example, St. Irenaeus (d. 202) presents an analysis of Gen. 4 in Book IV.xviii of *Against Heresies* in which he focuses on Cain's divided heart as the reason why his sacrifice was not acceptable. St. Ambrose (d. 397) in his treatise *On Cain and Abel* 2.6 (18), observes that "God is not appeased by the gifts that are offered, but by the disposition of the giver."[11] Thus Cain knew that his gift would not be accepted because it was not rightly offered.

In the *City of God,* Book XV, Augustine offers a detailed exegesis of the first two sons of Eve, with both seen as models for subsequent human development and priestly service.

> When those two cities began to run their course of birth and death, the first to be born was the citizen of this world, and only after him was there born the pilgrim in this world, who belonged to the city of God, predestined by grace and chosen by grace-by grace a pilgrim below and by grace a citizen above. (*City of God* XV.1)[12]

The critical question is why Abel's sacrifice was accepted, while Cain's was not; that is, why Abel was the first worthy priest, while Cain was not. Augustine observes that Abel's sacrifice is acceptable, not because he was sinless,[13] but because Abel's intention was to offer a good and undivided sacrifice in love to God. Extending the earlier insights from Irenaeus and Ambrose, Augustine interprets this to mean that Cain withheld from God his very self:

> We are given to understand then, that the reason God did not honor Cain's gift is that it was wrongly divided in the sense that although he gave something of his own to God, he gave himself to himself. And this is precisely what is done by all those who follow their own will

[9] Cyprian, "Epistle LV," Ante-Nicene Fathers 5, trans. Ernest Wallis (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 348.
[10] See John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition, Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Rivalry* (New York: Brill, 2011), 230-232.
[11] Ambrose, *On Cain and Abel,* in *Hexameron, Paradise and Cain and Abel,* Fathers of the Church 42, trans. John Savage (Washington D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 1961), 419.
[12] Augustine, *City of God,* 139-40.
[13] Augustine makes this point explicit in Ep 179.9. Arguing against the Pelagians, Augustine states that Abel was subject to original sin. See also Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition,* 175-6.

> rather than God's – that is they live in perversity of heart rather than righteousness of heart – and yet still offer gifts to God. (*City of God* XV.7)[14]

Augustine suggests that as a result of his perverse and envious heart, Cain seeks out and murders his brother. "Cain's envy was rather the diabolical envy that the evil feel toward the good simply because they are good." (*City of God* XV.4) Abel became the first worthy priest because his heart, and thus his sacrifice, was good and undivided; a model for all the faithful, especially the martyrs who will come after Abel.

3. Old Testament Modes of Participation in the Priesthood of Christ

The primary function of a priest is to offer sacrifice. In pagan antiquity, the priest offered worship at local temples, usually in the form of a living sacrifice, to many gods on behalf of diverse people. Ancient Israel came to understand the priestly function primarily to offer sacrifice to the one God at the one Temple in Jerusalem on behalf of God's one chosen people, the people Israel. As the Gospels and Paul make clear, Jesus unites in Himself all three aspects of worship: temple, priest and sacrifice. Those who live and die in His Name are likewise transformed by the unity He brings: a Christian's body as a participation in the new Temple; a Christian's life as a participation in the royal priesthood of Christ, and a Christian's suffering and death as a participation in the sacrifice of Christ.

The Church Fathers often turned to Paul's Letter to the Romans to explicate the priestly life of the faithful. The Church Fathers connected 1 Pt 2:9 with Rom 12:1, forming the link between priest and sacrifice; the laity are a *royal priesthood* precisely because they have been anointed into the sacrificial service of Christ, as Paul exhorts: *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship* (Rom 12:1). For example, Origen describes the transformation of the ancient priestly sacrifice of Israel into the new priestly sacrifice of the Christian faithful. In Homily 1.5 on Leviticus, Origen reinterprets Lv 1:3-9 in the light of Rom 12:1:

> The priest, and his sons, is in you the mind which is also its understanding in you who are rightly called a priest and "sons of a priest" for they are the only ones who perceive God and are capable of the knowledge of God. Therefore the divine Word desires that you offer your flesh to God in purity with reasonable understanding, as the Apostle says, *A living offering holy and pleasing to God, your reasonable service*. (Rom 12:1)[15]

During the time of martyrdom, faithful Christians anticipated the literal offering of their own bodies as a sacrifice for the sake of the Name. As early as the Book of Revelation, Christian martyrs are identified as those most worthy to offer the eternal celestial worship because of their earthly sacrifice. The Christian witness of martyrdom was the hallmark of Christianity for the lay and ordained faithful. The pre-Constantinian Church understood itself as a Church of martyrs, and could hardly conceive of itself any other way. The ultimate statement of devotion was through the patient endurance of the

[14] Augustine, *City of God,* 146.
[15] Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16,* 37.

martyr. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* illustrates the imitation of the martyrs in union with the suffering Christ. *The Martyrdom* purports to be written by an eye-witness to the suffering and death of St. Polycarp (d. 167), bishop of Smyrna. Many elements of Polycarp's betrayal, arrest, trial, suffering and death are meant to show the similarity with Jesus' suffering and passion. Near the conclusion of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp,* 17.3, the author observes, "For we worship this One (Christ) as Son of God, but we love the martyrs as disciples and imitators of the Lord…"[16]

The martyr's participation in Christ's original unifying sacrifice is also seen as extending to a participation in the continuing Eucharistic sacrifice.[17] Through his analysis of early Christian literature (i.e., *The Letters of Ignatius*, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *The Acts of the Martyrs*) Clancy described the way in which the persecution and death of the martyrs were presented as both a likeness to the sacrifice of Jesus, and as a personal sacrifice in imitation of the Eucharistic sacrifice. And if the martyrs were described as extensions of the Eucharistic liturgy, the liturgy quickly came to recognize and remember the sacrifice of the martyrs in sermons and in the Eucharistic prayer following the great anamnesis.[18] Augustine, for instance, wrote nearly 100 sermons for the feast days of the martyrs.[19]

Unlike the usual meaning of 'martyr' today, in the early Church a martyr's sacrifice did not have to be unto death; rather a 'martyr' was anyone who had suffered for the Name with a willingness to accept death (more usually referred to now as confessors.) Thus it became common practice to honor and revere as 'saints' those who managed to survive their times of suffering, including a belief that these living witnesses (confessors, martyrs) could forgive sins. In the third century, St. Hippolytus (d. 236) suggests in *The Apostolic Tradition* X.1 that those who suffered for the faith need not have hands laid on them to be recognized as a deacon or presbyter, as long as their witness included physical suffering: "For he has the office of the presbyterate by his confession."[20]

This exalted view of the martyr was tempered somewhat by St. Cyprian. Like other third century bishops, Cyprian was forced to counsel against treating martyrs like Roman cult heroes. Cyprian was especially concerned that martyrs were erroneously assuming the responsibilities which belonged to bishops. For instance, in Epistle XXII, Cyprian reports to Rome that several martyrs have issued certificates to the lapsed which purports to forgive their sin of apostasy. One of these martyrs, Lucian, is described by Cyprian:

> For our brother Lucian who himself also is one of the confessors (martyrs), earnest indeed in faith and robust in virtue, but little established in reading the Lord's word, has attempted

[16] *Martyrdom of Polycarp,* in *Early Christian Fathers,* trans. Cyril Richardson (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 155.
[17] See Finbarr Clancy, "Imitating the mysteries that you celebrate: martyrdom and Eucharist in the early Patristic period," *The Great Persecution: The Proceedings of the Fifth Patristics Conference*, Maynooth, 2003, eds. D. Vincent Twomey SVD and Mark Humphries, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 106-40.
[18] See Maxwell Johnson, "Martyrs and Mass: The Interpolation of the Narrative of Institution into the Anaphora," *Worship,* 87 No. 1 (Jan 2013), 2-22.
[19] Edward Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2014), 70.
[20] Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition,* X.1, trans. Gregory Dix (London: Alban Press, revised 1992), 18.

> certain things, constituting himself for a time an authority for unskilled people, so that certificates written in his hand were given indiscriminately to many persons…"[21]

As a result of these ecclesial concerns, St. Cyprian expressed the critical distinction between the priesthood of the laity and the ordained priesthood of bishops and others ordained by bishops for ministerial service in the Church. Bévenot has detailed the way in which Cyprian used *sacerdos* only when referring to bishops and other ordained ministers.[22]

Augustine profoundly admired the earlier martyrs' sacrifice in imitation of Christ's sacrifice. But his pastoral concern was to encourage his flock, no longer threatened by Roman persecution, to see the sacrifices of their daily lives in solidarity with the martyrs. Augustine makes this connection at the conclusion of Sermon 4:

> Many people have been crowned with victory for fighting wild beasts in the amphitheater. Many also beat the devil on a bed of sickness and are crowned for it…when you celebrate the birthdays[23] of the martyrs you may imitate the martyrs, and not suppose that you have no chance of winning the crown just because that kind of persecution is lacking nowadays.[24]

As DeSimone notes, "Augustine draws an interesting analogy between martyrs and ordinary Christians…Since the cause, and not the suffering, makes the martyr..." [25]

In *City of God,* X.3 the bishop of Hippo points to the dual *latreia* which is an acceptable offering to God alone, "whether enacted in certain sacraments, or in our very selves."[26] He elaborates on the meaning of a sacrifice 'in our very selves' in X.6. Noting that "The true sacrifice is every act done in order that we might cling to God in holy fellowship, that is, every act which is referred to the final good in which we can be truly blessed."[27] Augustine proceeds to interpret Rom 12:1 as a call to the virtue of temperance, "Our body also is a sacrifice when we discipline it by temperance."[28] Suggesting that the body is an instrument of the soul, Augustine includes the soul as the more important participant in the sacrifice of Rom 12:1 "...how much more does the soul itself become a sacrifice when it directs itself to God…"[29]

Perhaps because of the misdirected honors given to martyrs by many Christians (including Monica until Ambrose forbade it, see *Conf.* 6.2.2) Augustine carefully presented a balanced

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[21] Cyprian, "Epistle XXII," 300. Note that in the Oxford edition of Cyprian's epistles, this is listed as Epistle XXVII.
[22] Maurice Bévenot, "*Sacerdos* as Understood by Cyprian," *The Journal of Theological Studies,* New Series, Vol. 30 No. 2 (October 1979), 413-29.
[23] That is, the day of their deaths.
[24] Augustine, "Sermon 4," Works of Augustine III/1, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1990), 206.
[25] Russell DeSimone, *"*On Being a Christian*," Augustinian Studies* Vol. 19 (Villanova, Pa.: Villanova University Press, 1988), 9.
[26] Augustine, *City of God*, Works of Saint Augustine I/6, trans. William Babcock (New York: New City Press, 2013) 307.
[27] Augustine, *City of God* , Works of Saint Augustine I/6, 310.
[28] Augustine, *City of God* , Works of Saint Augustine I/6, 311.
[29] Ibid.

understanding of the martyrs, and the lay faithful in general. For instance in *City of God* X.21, Augustine notes that Christian martyrs have as their closest analogy the ancient heroes. However, he is also quick to point out that the Church does not allow martyrs to be referred to in this way to discourage inappropriate reverence for the martyrs. "If the traditional language of the Church allowed it, we might more elegantly call the martyrs our heroes…By 'heroes' we mean the souls of the dead marked by some special merit."[30]

Following Cyprian, Augustine is equally careful not to confuse the priesthood of the laity with the ordained priesthood. In *City of God* XX.10, he states that only bishops and priests are "properly called priests in the Church."[31] But even here, Augustine makes clear there is a priestly identity of the lay faithful which springs from the one source, Christ.

> Rather, just as we call all Christians 'christs' by virtue of their mystical anointing, so we call all Christians 'priests' (*sacerdotes)* because they are all members of the one priest. That is why the apostle Peter says that they are *a holy people, a royal priesthood.*[32]

II St. Peter Chrysologus

1. Background

In his compact style, St. Peter Chrysologus incorporated many of the themes from earlier Church Fathers concerning the priesthood of the laity, including martyrdom, sacrifice of the laity, military service analogies and the comparison of Cain and Abel.

What little is known about St. Peter's early life comes from a ninth century biography found in the *Liber Pontificalis* written by Agnellus of Ravenna, who first applied to St. Peter the sobriquet 'Chrysologus,' Golden Word. Based on this biography, St. Peter was most likely born c. 380 in Imola, becoming bishop of Ravenna c. 430, likely ordained bishop by Pope Celestine. During his episcopacy, Ravenna became a metropolitan see perhaps because it also became the de facto capital of the Western Empire. Between 423 and 450, the Empress Galla Placidia acted as regent during the minority of her son, Valentinian III, making her residence in Ravenna, and significantly contributing to the enhanced status of Ravenna and its archbishop, Peter.[33] Chrysologus contributed to the Christological controversies of the fifth century by his strong support of St. Flavian and Pope St. Leo the Great against Eutyches. St. Peter died around 450.

Chrysologus' approach to Scripture was much like other Patristic authors: accepting the entire corpus of Scripture as one divine, unified, work.[34] Although written over many centuries and various

[30] Augustine, *City of God,* Works of Saint Augustine I/6, 328-9.
[31] Augustine, *City of God*, Works of Saint Augustine I/7, 409.
[32] Ibid.
[33] See William Palardy, "Introduction," *St. Peter Chrysologus: Selected Sermons Vol 2,* Fathers of the Church 109 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2004), 7-11.
[34] Palardy, "Introduction," *St. Peter Chrysologus: Selected Sermons Vol 2,* 22-8.

historical circumstances, Chrysologus understood that the Divine Word was the ultimate source of all of Scripture. In his homilies he emphasized the New Testament, especially the Gospels, over the Old Testament, although Old Testament figures and verses are often referenced by St. Peter to illuminate aspects of the New Testament. Like most Patristic authors, he examined both the literal (historical) sense of Scripture and the deeper (allegorical) sense. For example, in Sermon 96, he notes that "Christ veils His doctrines by parables, covers it with figures, hides it under symbols, makes it obscure by mysteries."[35] He especially took his role as preacher to be one of explicating the deeper sense for his congregation; for example in Sermon 94 on the conversion of Mary Magdalen St. Peter explains his purpose: "With God's help we shall explain what is it of which that woman is a type or how great a mystery she prefigures…"[36]

The first collection of St. Peter's sermons comes from an eighth century bishop of Ravenna, Felix. In the sixteenth century a more extensive effort was made to collect and categorize the works of St. Peter Chyrsologus, which were published in Migne PL Vol. 52. In the twentieth century, Alejandro Olivar has provided new critical editions of the works of St. Peter. These can be found in the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (CCL) volumes XXIVA and XXIV B. Among the works attributed to St. Peter 1 letter and 183 homilies were authenticated in the twentieth century.[37]

Perhaps reflecting the fifth century lectionary in Ravenna, many of St. Peter's homilies appear as a series, presumably delivered on consecutive or near-consecutive days. For example, Chrysologus delivered a sequence of six homilies on the prodigal son, each focused on a few verses from Luke 15. Clearly preached with the expectation that they would be heard in succession, St. Peter frequently suggests to his audience in the earlier homilies that he will explain other aspects in subsequent homilies.[38]

As archbishop of Ravenna, St. Peter developed an abbreviated rhetorical style for his homilies.[39] In contrast to Augustine's detailed exegesis,[40] Chrysologus tended to focus on only a few verses within each homily. Most of his sermons are quite short, and could easily be preached in under 15 minutes. This style may have been to accommodate the practice in Ravenna and elsewhere of preaching three

[35] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 96", *St. Peter Chrysologus Sermons and St. Valerian Homilies*, Father of the Church 17, trans. George Ganss, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 152.
[36] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 94," 147.
[37] See William Palardy, "Introduction," *St. Peter Chrysologus: Selected Sermons Vol 2,* Fathers of the Church 109 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2004), 28.
[38] See for example, near the conclusion of the third sermon: "…we are already planning to explain the hidden symbolic mystery" (FOTC 17, 39); a plan fulfilled in the fifth sermon: "This is our fifth sermon…in it we shall try, as we have promised, to raise its historical sense to a mystical and extraordinary sense…" (17, 43-33)
[39] In his introduction to St. Peter Chrysologus' Sermons (FOTC Vol. 17, 3-4), George Ganss makes a distinction between homily (*homilia)* and sermon (*sermo)*, suggesting that St. Peter was crafting homilies rather than sermons; the distinction being that homilies are focused on explicating specific Scriptural passages, while sermons are devoted to a broader moral or doctrinal subject. While it is clear that St. Peter is focused on Scripture and less on doctrinal issues, the distinction between homily and sermon (other than as a Greek and Latin derivation, respectively) was not recognized in the Patristic period. Thus I will use 'homily' and 'sermon' interchangeably.
[40] Peter Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 12.

distinct homilies on each of the three main readings of the day (Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel).[41] As St. Peter notes at the beginning of Sermon 20:

> By God's profound design, the passages read in the services of the Church are arranged in a wise order, that they may bring deeper penetration to the learned, and impart wholesome grace of understanding to simple folk.[42]

St. Peter's approach within his sermons is a mix of simple, direct language but structured using complex rhetorical devices. Taking Sermon 43 as an example, he opens with:

> We should speak to the populace in popular fashion. The parish ought to be addressed by ordinary speech. Matters necessary to all men should be spoken about as men in general speak. Natural language is dear to simple souls and sweet to the learned.[43]

However, the sermon itself is highly structured using contrasting elements, rhetorical questions, word repetition and direct address to the congregation to emphasize the unity of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. For example:

> They (prayer, fasting, almsgiving) guide prosperity and ward off adversity. They extinguish vices and enkindle virtues.[44]

Within Sermon 43, St. Peter also addresses his congregation in one of his favorite manners: O man (the vocative, *homo*). Here and elsewhere, this form of address marks a critical point in the homily[45] and an exhortation to his listeners to change their lives in some way. St Peter uses this address combined with a series of oxymorons to conclude Sermon 43:

> Consequently, O man (*homo)*, lest you lose by saving, gather in by dispensing. O man (*homo)*, give to yourself by giving to the poor man.[46]

2. Sermons 108 and 109

Sermons 108 and 109 focus on Rom 12:1, and may have been preached by St. Peter in the weeks after Easter.[47] It was certainly intended that Sermon 109 would be preached shortly after Sermon 108, as St. Peter himself makes clear, referring to Sermon 108 in the opening words of Sermon

[41] Ibid.
[42] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 20" (FOTC 17), 61.
[43] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 43" (FOTC 17), 90.
[44] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 43" (FOTC 17), 91.
[45] J. H. Baxter, J.H. Baxter, "The Homilies of St. Peter Chrysologus," *The Journal of Theological Studies,* Vol. 22 No. 87 (April 1921),255.
[46] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 43" (FOTC 17),94.
[47] The Latin text as edited by A. Olivar for Sermons 108 and 109 can be found in CCL XXIV A, pp 668-671 and 672-675, respectively.

109: "Our preceding sermon touched merely on the opening words of the Apostle's passage."[48] It is not known if these homilies were part of a larger sequence on Romans 12; however if St. Peter did continue his exegesis with other sermons, these have not survived.

Sermon 108[49] concentrates on the opening phrase of Rom 12:1, *I exhort you, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice,* and can be divided into two sections. In the first section Chrysologus analyzes the meaning of *by the mercy of God*; the second section interprets *to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.* Section one begins by observing that the piety preached by Paul in Rom 12:1 is asking (*precatur)* for prayers from his listeners so that they might receive (*largiatur)* God's bountiful mercy. The connecting image throughout Sermon 108 is the human body. Initiating the bodily images, St. Peter offers the analogy of a sick person who asks to be cured, and the physician who generously gives medicine for the cure. At this point, St. Peter suggests that God is speaking through Paul to encourage Christians to ask for the mercy that will be freely given, because God wants to be our kindly Father, not severe Lord. St. Peter presents somatic images of God the Father welcoming us as His people:

> He opens His arms, He enlarges His heart, He proffers His breast, He invites us to His bosom, He lays open His lap, that He may show Himself a Father.[50]

Continuing the physical theme of God as Father, St. Peter applies the same images to Christ in His passion, with the same arms, heart, bosom, lap images applied to Christ on the cross.

Having established the bodily imagery of God as Father and Jesus in His passion, St. Peter turns in the second section of Sermon 108 to Paul's meaning in: *I exhort you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.* (Rom 12:1), repeating Rom12:1 three times, each time followed by a brief insight. The first reference to Rom 12:1 is immediately followed by noting that Paul has "raised all men to a priestly (*sacerdotale)* rank (*fastigium)*."[51] Chrysologus, with some hyperbole, emphasizes the importance of this sacerdotal calling of the baptized by referring to the high priestly (*pontificatus*) calling of Christians, in which the Christian is "both victim and priest for himself."[52]

The second reference to Rom 12:1 makes clear that this high priestly calling of the Christian can only "come to us" by the imitation (*ex forma*) of Christ's sacrifice; only then is the Christian both a priest and a victim. Echoing the duality of both asking and giving at the beginning of the sermon, St. Peter says that now each Christian can both ask as priest and give himself as victim. In a reference to the earlier Christian ideal of sacrifice by the martyrs, St. Peter observes that through their death they are given new life, referring to their birth to eternal life at the time of their death. Thus for the martyrs and all Christians, a righteous death is a type of birth.

[48] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 109" (FOTC 17), 171.
[49] Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol 52, Col 499-500
[50] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 108" (FOTC 17), 168.
[51] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 108" (FOTC 17), 169.
[52] Ibid.

Reaching the climax of Sermon 108, St. Peter quotes Rom 12:1 a third time, encouraging his congregation with "Be, O man (*homo*), be both a sacrifice to God and a priest."[53] They can "be both a sacrifice and a priest" by "putting on the robe of sanctity…girded with the belt of chastity." Instead of outer priestly robes, "Cover your breast with the mystery of heavenly knowledge." Instead of a priestly offering in the Temple: "Set up your heart as an altar…move your body forward in this way to make it a victim for God."[54]

Chrysologus concludes Sermon 108 with a reference to the sacrifice of Isaac and the Christian martyrs, suggesting that the virtues offer a way for his listeners to become the living sacrifice. Presenting fasting, chastity, mercy as examples which can lead to the death of gluttony, lusts, and avarice, St. Peter ends Sermon 108 by asserting that this is the sacrifice of the Christian priest: "Your body lives, O man, it lives as often as you have offered to God a life of virtues through the death of your vices."[55]

Continuing the exegesis from the previous sermon, Sermon 109 examines the meaning of sacrifice in the context of the *reasonable sacrifice* of Rom 12:1. Like Augustine before him, the archbishop of Ravenna interprets 'body' in Rom 12:1 as a synecdoche for the entire person, body and soul. He immediately uses a series of rhetorical questions, emphasizing that the body cannot be considered without also including the soul, concluding with: "Then what is the reason why the soul gets no mention, and only the body is thus summoned to be a victim?"[56] Immediately answering his question, Chrysologus observes that Paul speaks of the body as the sacrifice because "sins master the body"[57] and "vices corrupt it and passions weigh it down."[58] He then argues that rather than trying to denigrate the body, Paul "wants the body to rise up to where the soul took its origin, rather than have the soul descend to the nature of the body." Linking Ps 50, *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit,* St. Peter suggests "the Apostle…wishes both the body and soul, that is the whole man, to become a holy victim, a sacrifice pleasing to God."[59]

Sermon 109 continues by delving into the meaning of *a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God*. The faithful Christian becomes a faithful priest only when he offers himself in a holy manner, without reservation. Following the earlier Patristic tradition, St. Peter gives the counter-example of Cain:

> As an ungrateful priest (*pontifex)*, he so shared his few possessions with God, from whom he had received everything, that he offered the worst of them upon the altar. He kept back for himself what was best, and thereby gave offense.[60]

[53] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 108" (FOTC 17), 169. *Esto, homo, esto et Dei sacrificium et sacerdos*
[54] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 108" (FOTC 17), 170.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 109" (FOTC 17), 171.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 109" (FOTC 17), 172.
[60] Ibid.

As with the bishop of Hippo, the bishop of Ravenna believes Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable because it was a divided sacrifice, that is, Cain did not fully offer himself: "…he arranged a division with his Maker"[61] with the result that Cain and his descendants would be divided from God (made more emphatic and complete by the use of *per-* in *perdivisit*[62]*.)*

Linking Cain's sin with the next phrase in Rom 12:1, *your reasonable service* (*rationabile obsequium vestrum*) St. Peter considers what a reasonable service is not: "disturbed by presumptions, or disordered by rashness, or profaned by transgressions, or colored by pretense."[63] These were all the mark of Cain's unworthy sacrifice. Instead, much as Cyprian and Augustine had suggested before him, Chrysologus offers the image of faithful soldiers as an analogy for the reasonable service of the faithful Christians: standing in fear, punctilious service, and alert devotion.[64]

Returning to Old Testament analogies of unfaithful priests, St. Peter described the unfaithful service of the priestly sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1-7), and the presumptive priesthood of Saul (I Sam 13-15). Because both sacrifices violated God's commands, His prophet (Moses and Samuel, respectively) announced that the offerings are unworthy and foolish; and both Aaron's sons and Saul would suffer the penalty of death for their rash actions. St. Peter extends to his own time the principle of unreasonable priests who are liable to destruction. He mentions the fourth century priests Arius and Photinus[65] by name, both of whom unreasonably denied the divinity of Jesus and so also denied the Trinity.[66]

Chrysologus concludes Sermon 109 exhorting his listeners to "make our bodies fit to be a living sacrifice to God," by recommending the virtues of faith, hope and love, and specific ways these virtues should be lived. By following St. Peter's instructions, his listeners will be on the path to "a perfect service of Christ" as long as "humility always accompanies our steps."[67] It is through this perfect service, offered in humility, that the Christian becomes both a worthy sacrifice and a faithful priest.

Conclusion

The Church Fathers gave later generations of Christians a rich understanding of the priesthood of the faithful held in common by all Christians. As the Church Fathers make clear, the baptismal anointing as 'priest, prophet, king' is to be lived out in the particular circumstances of each Christian, but in unity with Christ and the Church. Those circumstances may be a call to public and violent martyrdom for the Name; or it may be the quiet daily sacrifice of virtue leading to final illness and death, but also offered in sacrifice in union with the Name. Building on images from earlier Patristic authors, St. Peter Chrysologus has bequeathed to us two sermons illustrating the type of priesthood and sacrifice

[61] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 109" (FOTC 17), 173.
[62] See J.H. Baxter, "The Homilies of St. Peter Chrysologus," 251, on Chrysologus' use of *per-*.
[63] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 109" (FOTC 17), 173
[64] Ibid.
[65] Arius was an early 4th C priest in Alexandria; Photinus was a mid-4th C bishop in Pannonia.
[66] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 109" (FOTC 17), 174.
[67] Peter Chrysologus, "Sermon 109" (FOTC 17), 175.

expected from the lay faithful. Through the witness of virtue in their lives, he encourages his listeners in the twenty-first as well as the fifth century: *Esto, homo, esto et Dei sacrificium et sacerdos.*