

LITURGICAL SYMBOLISM IN THE
BAPTISMAL HOMILIES OF
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTHOM AND
THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA

An appraisal and a comparison

ON account of the intensive missionary activity of the early Church and the changed situation brought about by the Constantinian settlement, the urgent need existed for an organization capable of coping with the increased number of persons asking for admission into the Church, so that only those worthy of membership would be accepted. There had always been an insistence that no one should be received into the Church unless he had first been fully instructed in the faith, but this instruction was originally more or less a private initiative. It was only later, perhaps after the great shock resulting from the large number of defections during the Decian persecutions, that instruction in the faith came under direct ecclesiastical supervision with the introduction of the catechuminate.

The *Αποστολική παράδοσις* of Hippolytus¹ gives the essential structure of the catechuminate in the third century, but this structure underwent considerable modifications during the following centuries until it fell into disuse when in Christian lands there were no longer any adult Baptisms and a new policy came into being with the wholesale conversions of the barbarian peoples.

Those who desired to become Christians had to be recommended by someone who was already a Christian, who vouched for their sincerity and intention of leading a true Christian life.² Once ac-

¹ The *Αποστολική παράδοσις* is today considered to be an ideal Church Order and not the description of the Liturgy of the Roman Church in the third century (Cfr. J.H. Hanssens, *La Liturgie d'Hippolyte*, Rome 1959). The work of Hippolytus had a great influence in the development of Liturgy, especially in the East.

² The structure of the catechuminate described here is an ideal one, for in practice things did not take place as described. Many enrolled themselves with the catechumens, but only with the intention of receiving Baptism on their death-bed or late in life, not wishing to bind themselves to a Christian way of life in their youth or early manhood, for fear of falling into sin after their Baptism and having to submit to the strict Penitential dis-

cepted, the person was inscribed among the catechumens and for three years he was instructed in the Scriptures and in the main principles of Christian life. During the whole of this period of instruction, the moral behaviour of the candidate was under constant observation.

After this period of preparation, the catechumenate entered into a second stage. The catechumen, now well prepared to live a real Christian life, at the beginning of the Lenten period, through his sponsor asked the Church to accept him among the *electi*, the οἱ μέλλοντες φωτίζεσθαι.

During Lent³ the *electi* daily received more detailed instruction in the faith, the contents of which were summarized in the *symbolum* or Baptismal Creed, which each candidate had to memorize and later repeat before the bishop towards the end of the instruction period (the *traditio* and *redditio symboli*). Daily instruction was accompanied by prayer and fasting and by frequent exorcisms till Easter Eve, when, after having renounced the devil and professed his faith in Christ, after having received the sign of the cross on his forehead, and had his whole body anointed with exorcised oil, the *electus* was baptised by being immersed three times in water. Coming out of the water he put on a white garment and was anointed with holy chrism, thus being able to partake for the first time in the Lord's Supper.

The second stage of the catechumenate, on account of its importance, was more or less directly supervised by the bishop himself, although the active and personal intervention of the bishop

discipline of the time. St. John Chrysostom and several other Fathers spoke harshly against this custom, but to no avail.

Parents enrolled their children when still infants and although infant Baptism was quite common towards the end of the second century (Cfr. Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 18,) many parents did not baptise their children when infants, but let them grow up to decide for themselves when to receive Baptism: this often happened when the father was a pagan as in the case of St. Augustine.

St. John in one of his homilies (*Adversus Iudaeos oratio*, III Pg. 48, 868) deplors the fact that many remain catechumens all their life, each year celebrating Lent but not Easter.

³The enrolling of catechumens probably took place during the first days of Lent and daily instruction began regularly after the closing date of the enrolment, about thirty days before Easter; at least this seems to have been the custom at Antioch (Cfr. A. Wenger, St. Jean Chrysostome, *Huit Catecheses baptismales inédites*, Sources Chrétiennes 50, introd. Chap. 2, par. 7).

was not everywhere the same; at least this is what one concludes from available documents.

In Jerusalem in the 4th century, for example, the bishop daily instructed the candidates for Baptism in the basilica of the Holy Cross,⁴ and also daily addressed the newly baptised, during Easter week, in the church of the Holy Sepulchre.⁵ At Antioch, on the other hand, the bishop during the whole of Lent did not speak more than two or three times to the catechumens, probably on the occasion of the more solemn exorcisms.⁶

We cannot say that there was a fixed pattern of instruction, but a number of themes were continually recurring, namely the nature of Baptism, the symbolism of the rite, the Eucharist; other themes were the Creed, the Lord's prayer and true Christian life.

This paper is not dealing with all the themes forming the subject matter of the Baptismal homilies of the early Church, but is limited to assessing the value of the symbolical explanations of the Baptismal rites given by Theodore of Mopsuestia⁷ and St. John

⁴Cfr. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* and *Catecheses ad illuminandos*, 1-18, Pg. 33, 332-1060.

⁵In the conclusion of the eighteenth catechesis *Ad illuminandos*, Cyril tells the candidates for Baptism that from the second day of Easter, every day, after the assembly, they were to gather in the Holy place of the Resurrection for other instructions. Actually, there are only five mystagogical catecheses attributed to Cyril, which with a greater probability ought to be attributed to his successor John II (Pg. 33, 1065-1128; A Piedagnel - P. Paris, *Cyril de Jerusalem, Catecheses mystagogiques*, Sources Chretiennes 126, Paris, 1966).

⁶St. John Chrysostom, from what has survived from his catechetical instructions, seems to have addressed the candidates for Baptism, on one occasion, four times: thirty days before Easter, ten days later, on Maundy Thursday and during the Easter vigil; on another occasion he addressed them twice, one at the beginning and one at the end of the instruction period. He addressed the Neophytes five times during Easter week on one occasion, but these instructions cannot be considered mystagogical catecheses in the strict sense of the word, for they are rather a series of moral instructions, a practical initiation to Christian moral life (Cfr. A! Wenter, *St. Jean Chrysostom, Huit catecheses baptismales inedites*, *Sources Chretiennes* 50, Paris 1957, introd. Chap. 3, par. 2.)

⁷The catechetical instructions of Theodore of Mopsuestia are generally known as the 'Liber ad baptizandos'; they were discovered in the Mingana collection of manuscripts (Cod. Mingana syr. 561 now in the Selli Oak Colleges' library, Birmingham) and published with an English translation as volumes V and VI of the Woodbroode studies; A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed*, Woodbrooke Studies V, Cambridge 1932, and A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*

Chrysostom⁸ in their Baptismal homilies.

One might perhaps not expect any insistence on symbolism in the homilies of these two bishops who owed their formation to the school of Antioch, but, as both bishops state, symbolism belongs to the essence of Liturgy, because all liturgical actions are the 'unspeakable signs' of the divine realities.⁹

Symbolism seems to be out of place, and therefore misunderstood, in a technological age like ours, although we still perform in our daily lives several symbolical actions without being aware of them, but symbolism was native to the culture in which Chris-

on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, Woodbrooke studies VI, Cambridge 1933. The present paper deals mainly with the three homilies on Baptism, Chaps. II-IV of the second volume.

⁸It seems that three series of catechetical instructions by St. John Chrysostom have survived:

(a) a first series, consisting of four homilies, one of which was published as *Ad Illuminandos catechesis I* by B.D. de Montfaucon, S.P.N. *Ioannis Chrysostomi opera omnia quae exstant vel eius nomine circumferuntur*, Paris, 1733, tom. II pag. poulus — Kerameus, *Varia Graeca sacra*, Saint Petersburg, 1909, p. VV-XXV and 154-183. The fourth homily (*Ad neophytos*) belongs also to the third series. The first homily is also found in the Papadopoulos — Kerameus collection and in this collection it corresponds to that found in the edition of the works of Chrysostom by the Jesuit Fronton du Duc, in 12 volumes, Paris 1609-1633.

(b) a second series, of which only one homily has survived, that published in the Montfaucon edition as the *Catechesis ad illuminandos II* (tom. II pag. 141-147) and reproduced in Pg. 231-240.

(c) a third series of eight homilies, discovered by A. Wenger in 1955 in a manuscript (codex 6) of the monastery of Stavronikita on mount Athos, and published in 1957 as vol. 50 of *Sources Chretiennes* (a second edition with supplement was published in 1970). The third homily is identical with the fourth homily of the Papadopoulos — Kerameus collection and with the Latin sermon *Ad neophytos* published in appendix in Vol. II of Fronton du Duc's edition of Chrysostom's works. St. Augustine refers to the Latin translation of this homily in his *Contra Iulianum* (1, 6, 21) for Julian of Eclanum had quoted in favour of Pelagianism Chrysostom's statement that the Church also baptizes infants although they have no sins (Cfr. *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, II, 4460-4472, Turnout, 1974; A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit catecheses inedites, Sources chretiennes* 50, Paris 1957, introd. chp. II)

⁹St. John Chrysostom speaks of the need of the eyes of faith to see what is invisible to the senses (Cfr. catechesis II of the third series, 9-11.

'Every sacrament' says Theodore, 'consists in the representation of unseen and unspeakable things through signs and emblems. Such things require explanation and interpretation, for the sake of the person who draws nigh unto the sacrament, so that he might know its power' (Mingana, vol. VI, chp. II, pg. 17).

tianity developed, for the Greek mind had an excellent understanding of the nature and purpose of symbols.

Every religion creates sensible images or symbols of spiritual things. This is due to the fact that a religious man is compelled to make use of certain images or ideas, with which nature has provided him, whenever he wants to express something which is not of this world, but exists on a higher plane. Because all things which act by or through the senses can never convey, much less exhaust the spirit they are seeking to convey, all symbols and symbolical actions are always subject to limitations.

The sense character of the symbol serves also to hide the glory it seeks to express, so that it is revealed only to those who have been deemed worthy of seeing it. For it is a psychological law that the deeper and more moving the religious perception of a pious man becomes, the more such experience inclines him to guard it from the uninitiated, and his anxiety to do this is increased if there is any danger of profanation.¹⁰

This psychological law began to operate in Christianity as soon as the external circumstances appropriate to it came into being. The Christian message is addressed to all mankind, it has to be 'preached from the rooftops', yet, when Christianity, in the third century, became more popular and widespread, the *disciplina arcani* came into being and reached a full development a century later. Baptism and the Eucharist became 'the awe-inspiring mysteries', and the deeper meaning of the Christian rites was only revealed to the *electi* on the day of their Baptism and during Easter week.

In the third century the Church had fully adapted itself to the Greek surroundings in which it had grown, and exploited to the full the Greek passion for the mystery cults of the time, using the words and images of these cults, to explain Christian worship, which was now spoken of as 'the awe-inspiring mysteries'.

The term *μυστήριον* was only applied to Christian worship after the third century, although Christianity had always been designated as a 'mystery', but a mystery *sui generis*, something altogether alien to and different from the 'mysteries' of Hellenism. Christianity is 'the mystery hidden for ages in God'¹¹ and revealed to us in the fullness of time by Christ, it is a deed of God, the execu-

¹⁰ H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, English version, London 1963, Chp. I and III.

¹¹ Eph. 3, 9.

tion of the everlasting plan which proceeds from eternity, is realized in time and in the world, and will return once more to God, its goal in eternity; it is Christ himself, God's revelation in the saving action of His incarnate Son and the redemption and healing of the world. It is a mystery which, although proclaimed everywhere 'from the rooftops', remains incomprehensible to those who have no understanding for the things of the spirit, for it is no human wisdom that reveals it, but the Spirit of God, in the measure of our capacity to take the Spirit into ourselves.¹²

The saving action of the God-man, after his return to the Father, is continued in the Church, mainly through the Liturgy: one can therefore easily explain why *μυστηρίων* after the third century came to designate Christian worship. Christ has returned to the Father, but He is still with us, for *we find him in his mysteries*¹³ where he renews *in mysterio* the salvific actions of his life on earth.

Liturgy and mystery are interchangeable:¹⁴ 'mystery' is the heart of the action of the God-man, the redeeming work of the risen Lord, through the sacred actions he has appointed; 'Liturgy' is the sacred action itself, the actions of the Church in conjunction with the saving action of Christ. For when the Church performs her exterior acts, Christ is inwardly at work in them, and thus what the Church does is truly a *μυστηρίων*, an 'awe-inspiring mystery'.

In Baptism Christ demanded rebirth for entry into his Kingdom: 'unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God'.¹⁵ 'Spirit' or *πνευμα* is the breath of God, from which supernatural life flows; it is God himself and his life dwelling in the baptised person, a 'new man', a completely new being, 'partaker of the divine nature',¹⁶ sharing in God's being. But the Lord says that the new man is to be born again in water, and here the mystery of worship arises, for in the realm of God's actions this birth from water can only be the exterior visible expression of the real birth 'of the Spirit'. Water here has no natural worth of its own, but only symbolic value, and this symbolic value is what the Lord says is absolutely necessary, for without the exterior act of the water bath we could not recognize God's act. The plain tan-

¹²O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship and other writings*, edited by B. Neunhauser, English version, London 1962, chp. 2, i.

¹³St. Ambrose, *De Apologia prophetae David*, 5, 8.

¹⁴O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, Chp. 2, iii.

¹⁵Jh. 3, 5.

¹⁶I Peter 1, 4.

gible action of plunging into water is the pledge of the reality of God's begetting; but it would be an error to think that it was enough to have a dumb dipping into water to have a picture of God's grace. Water alone has no capacity for that, it has to be complemented by something higher ... the Spirit ... but what is better suited to express the Spirit than the lightness and refinement of the word?¹⁷ 'Take away the word,' says Augustine, 'and what is water except mere water. Word comes to the water and the mystery is there.'¹⁸

Briefly, Baptism in essence is the simple sign of water and the word that draws its life giving power from Christ's death upon the Cross. Fundamentally this is St. Paul's doctrine in the letter to the Romans,¹⁹ and is also the main theme which continually recurs in the Baptismal homilies of the Fathers, who also insist on the eschatological character of the action. 'Baptism is a second birth,' says Theodore, 'because it contains the symbol of the second birth and because through Baptism we participate in symbol in this second birth ... when at Baptism I plunge my head (in water) I receive the death of Christ our Lord, and desire to have his burial, and because of this I firmly believe in the resurrection of the Lord: and when I rise from the water I think I have symbolically risen a long time ago ... all this is done in symbol and in signs ... (but) we do not make use of vain signs only, but of realities of Baptism ... (Now, through it) we only receive the symbol of the adoption of children, but ... thereafter, having been born afresh, risen from the death, (we) become also immortal and incorruptible ... we shall receive the real adoption.'²⁰

The simple water bath accompanied by the speaking of certain words could never express fully the whole mystery of the second birth, for, as we have remarked at the beginning of this paper, every symbolical action can never fully express the higher realities it indicates. This is why, in the short period of three centuries, the simple Baptismal rites of the Apostolic times, developed into a rich and solemn celebration, in which the apparently trifling and insignificant action with water accompanied by a few spoken words, was clearly indicated as being full of immense and

¹⁷ O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, chp. 2, iii.

¹⁸ *Tractatus in Ioanne* 80, 3.

¹⁹ Rom. 6, 3-11.

²⁰ A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, Cambridge 1933, chp. II, p. 51-53.

incredible consequences.

The Fathers therefore, ever aware, much more than we are, of the tension between the symbol and its meaning, between the slightness of the visible action and the awful power of the invisible reality, felt the need of explaining to the initiated the deeper meaning of the symbolical actions accompanying the water bath, so that the newly baptised would fully realize the power and the greatness of the mystery into which they had been initiated.

St. John Chrysostom shows a certain originality of approach in his explanation of the Baptismal mystery: he speaks of Baptism as a spiritual marriage between Christ and the soul, and considers the period of instruction before Baptism as the instruction of the bride, who is leaving her parents, her home and her country herself to a man whom she has never seen, or known, or heard, and who would be taking her away from her father's home. At this spiritual marriage the bridegroom brings his gifts, the blood he has shed for the redemption and purification of the Church, and the bride brings her marriage contract, the renouncing of Satan and the attachment to Christ.²¹

Theodore, on the other hand, in explaining the symbolism of certain actions, seems to ignore the true origin of the signs, and opens the way to a particular type of allegorical explanations which became very popular in the Middle Ages and were still popular till a few years ago in certain circles. The explanation of the deacon's ministry, of the deacon's stole²² and of the priest's vestments²³ are pure imagination, while his explanation of the

²¹ This explanation is given in Catech. I, 1-18 (A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostom, Huit catecheses baptismales inedites*, Paris, 1957, p. 108-118.

²² 'Was it not right ... that ... (the deacons) should represent as in an image the ministry of the angels?'

'... (they) represent the Likeness of the service of the spiritual messengers and ministers. They have also an apparel which is consonant with their office since their outer garment is taller than they are, as wearing such an apparel, in such a way is suitable to those who serve. They place on their shoulders a stole, which floats on either side, forwards and backwards. This is a sign that they are not performing a ministry of servitude but of freedom ... They do not place the stole on their neck in a way that it floats on either side but not in front, because there is no one serving in a house who wears such an apparel' (A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, chp. V, p. 84-86).

²³ 'The priest draws near to you ... clad in a robe of clean and radiant linen, the joyful appearance of which denotes the joy of the world in the future, and the shining colour of which designates your own radiance

action of placing the gifts on the altar recalls to mind the attempts, so popular in the Middle Ages and later, to find parallels of the various moments of Christ's passion in the rites of the Mass.²⁴

Both bishops are more or less in agreement with regard to the symbolical explanations they give of the Baptismal rites.

The need of a sponsor²⁵ for Baptism is explained with reference to the need of a guarantee when one incurs a heavy debt: man's debt with God is heavy, and when one intends paying this debt by renouncing the devil and uniting himself to Christ in Baptism, he needs someone to guarantee the sincerity of his intentions. Such a person should be fully aware of his duties and must act as a father in God, with affection and tenderness, helping the person he is sponsoring to lead a true Christian life, for otherwise any future infidelity of this person to his Baptismal promises, will recoil on him.²⁶

The sponsor presents the candidate to the priest for instruction. This is what usually takes place in human affairs, for none approaches the lord of the house to offer his services but goes to the head of the household and makes with him his engagements and contract of service. So also it is when we approach the house of God, the Church: 'we approach the Lord of the house through the priest who has been found worthy of presiding over the church'.²⁷

in the life to come, while its cleanliness indicates the ease and happiness of the next world (A. Mingana, o.c., chp. III, p. 45; Cfr. also chp. IV, p. 58)

²⁴ '... When the offering which is about to be placed (on the altar) is brought out in the sacred vessels of the paten and the chalice, we much think that Christ our Lord is being led and brought to His Passion ...' (Mingana, o.c., chp. V, p. 85)

²⁵ Sponsors were necessary in great centres like Antioch and Constantinople, for it was impossible for the clergy to know well all those who asked for Baptism. Theodore of Mopsuestia gives great importance to the sponsors during the period of preparation and during the Baptismal rite itself. St. John Chrysostom, on the other hand, in his homilies makes no reference to the presentation of candidates by their sponsors, but in Catecheses II, 15-16 (A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit catechese baptismales inedites*, Paris 1957, p. 141-142) he speaks directly to the sponsors and urges them to be worthy of their popular designation as *πατέρας πνευματικους* (officially they are known as *ἀναδεχόμενοι*)

²⁶ This is Chrysostom's explanation of the duties of a sponsor (Cfr. A. Wenger, o.c. catechese II, 15-16)

²⁷ This is Theodore's explanation (cfr. A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism*

Once one is enrolled for instruction in the faith 'in the hope of acquiring the abode and citizenship of heaven', he starts a kind of lawsuit with the devil, who tries to prove by all means his right of ownership over him. But God, after hearing against Satan 'the One who was assumed', gives the sentence against the devil. This is Theodore's explanation²⁸ of the rites of exorcism which take place during the period of instruction. Chrysostom, on the other hand, sees exorcisms as being the continual endeavour of the candidate, who will be host to God in his Baptism, to clean his home and make it worthy to receive the Most High.²⁹

During exorcisms, all the candidates, without distinction of social status or rank, stand barefoot on sackcloth, with hands lifted in silent prayer. Both bishops see in this posture the symbol of man's captivity, from which Baptism delivers us.³⁰ Captivity to the devil is also symbolised by the posture of the candidate when he renounces the devil: he kneels, with bowed head but body erect (adds Theodore), while his hands are lifted in prayer. With such a posture he recalls to himself the situation from which he is being delivered, while worshipping God in heaven, from whom he expects his deliverance.³¹

and the Eucharist, chp. II, p. 33-34) of the candidates' presentation by their sponsors to the priest for instruction.

²⁸ Cfr. A. Mingana, o.c., chp. II, pp. 27-31.

²⁹ Cfr. A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit cateches Baptismales inedites*, Paris 1956, cat. 11, 12.

³⁰ 'When the words of exorcism are pronounced you stand perfectly quiet as if you had no voice and as if you had fear and dread of the Tyrant, not being in a position to look at him on account of ... the fact that he had been for a long time the master of your servitude ... You stand with outstretched arms in the posture of one who prays, and look downwards ... and you take off your outer garment and stand barefooted in order to show yourself the state of cruel servitude in which you served the devil ... you stand on garments of sackclothes so that from the fact that your feet are pricked and stung by the roughness of the cloth you may remember old sin and show penitence' (A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, chp. II, p. 31-32)

'The words of exorcism are terrible and solemn,' says St. John Chrysostom, 'but the posture of the candidate is something altogether different: when they are on the point of being delivered from tyranny, by their posture they recall to mind their previous condition of servitude (Cfr. A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit cateches Baptismales inedites*, catech. II, 14)

³¹ 'These engagements and promises you make ... while your knee is bowed to the ground both as a sign of adoration which is due from you to

After renouncing the devil, the candidate receives the sign of the Cross with holy oil on his forehead, that part of the head, explains Theodore, which is placed above all the body, with which we look at one another when we speak to each other. The sign of the forehead means that one is stamped as a lamb of Christ, as a soldier of the heavenly king, and indicates that one now possesses great confidence. This is what Theodore³² has to say, but Chrysostom's explanation is deeper:³³ the sign of the Cross brilliantly shining on one's forehead will blind the devil, who will no longer dare to look at the newly baptized.

At this point Theodore mentions a rite which is not met with elsewhere. The sponsor covers the crown of the head of the candidate for Baptism with a linen stole: this, according to Theodore, symbolises the freedom one is achieving in Baptism, for only slaves and exiles go about bareheaded.³⁴

The Baptismal rites proper, celebrated during the Easter vigil,³⁵ began with the anointing with exorcised oil the whole body of the candidate, after he had taken off all his clothes. This anointing, according to Chrysostom, implies entry into heaven, as the body, fortified with the holy oils, is now invulnerable to the attacks of the devil.³⁶ For Theodore the taking off the clothes symbolises the immortality we acquire through Baptism, while the anointing shows that everything in us has been changed into incorrupti-

God as a manifestation of your ancient fall to the ground: the rest of your body: the rest of your body is erect and looks upwards towards Heaven and your hands outstretched in the guide of one who prays so that you may be seen to worship God ... from whom you expect to rise from your ancient fall.' (A. Mingana, o.c. chp. III, p. 45.)

'You should see in this posture,' says St. John, 'your former captivity: the priest bids you kneel and lift up your hands ... to remind you from what you have been delivered and to whom you are attaching yourself,' (A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 18)

³² A. Mingana, o.c., chp. III, p. 46.

³³ A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 23. In this instruction St. John speaks simply of a sign $\sigma\pi\sigma\alpha\gamma\iota\varsigma$, but evidently he refers to a sign of the cross (Cfr. note 2. p. 146)

³⁴ A. Mingana, o.c., chp. III, p. 47.

³⁵ In the second instruction (A. Wenger, o.c., cat. II, 24) St. John Chrysostom states 'when night sets in'. According to this instruction it seems that the solemn rite of renouncing the devil and adhering to Christ took place on the Saturday itself during the day, but the third catechesis of the Papadopoulos-Kerameus series clearly states that this rite took place on Good Friday at three in the afternoon (cfr. A. Wenger, o.c., introd. Chp. III, 4)

³⁶ A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 24.

bility.³⁷

Immediately after this anointing, the candidate goes down into the sacred waters, burying the old man, to rise again as a new man, in the image of his creator.

While Theodore explains at length in one homily the symbolic meaning of all the actions that take place during Easter night, fully developing the meaning of the main action and giving a full explanation of the Baptismal words,³⁸ St. John Chrysostom very briefly refers to the main actions and to the concluding rites, simply explaining why the priest uses the impersonal form 'So-and-so is baptised'.³⁹ He preferred addressing the newly baptised on Easter morning, when the vigil had come to an end. With words full of emotion, he addresses the newly baptised as stars in the Church's firmament, urging them to face their spiritual combat, fully confident of winning in virtue of the blood of Christ, who is with them and in them.⁴⁰

³⁷'As when Adam was formerly asked and was in nothing ashamed of himself, but after having broken the commandment and became mortal, he found himself in need of an outer covering, so also you, who are ready to draw nigh unto the gift of Holy Baptism so that you may be born afresh and become symbolically immortal, rightly remove your covering, which is a sign of mortality ... you receive through your anointing the sign of the covering of immortality ... you are anointed all over your body as a sign that ... all our nature will put on immortality ... and all that is seen in us, internal or external, will undoubtedly be changed into incorruptability.' (A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 54)

³⁸A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 48-70.

³⁹A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 26. The impersonal form, according to Chrysostom, clearly indicates the ministerial action of the priest: he acts as the minister of Baptism, he just lends his hand to God, for he has been ordained for such a duty by the Holy Spirit (την χεῖρα την εαυτου παρεχει, επειδη εις τουτο παρα του πνευματος δεξασθαι) by this action of immersing the candidate in the water he disposed him to receive the Holy Spirit (δια της μυστηης αυτης τελετης την του πνευματος παρα σκευαζον επι φοιτησιν δεξασθαι) St. John's theological precision on this point is admirable.

Theodore gives the same explanation: '(the priest) does not say "I baptize (so-and-so)", but "(so-and-so) is baptized" ... in order to show that as a man like the rest of men he is not able to bestow such benefits which only divine grace can bestow.' (A. Mingana, o.c., chap. IV, p. 59)

⁴⁰In a high lyrical tone which Necer falters throughout the homily, St. John Chrysostom expresses his joy and blesses God for the great gift of so many new stars in the Church's firmament. He speaks of the multiple graces of Baptism, of the spiritual armour which the newly baptised have received from God, and of the spiritual food to which they are now entitled, the blood of Christ which flows from His pierced side, sym-

After coming out of the water the newly baptised receive a white garment, which, Theodore says, denotes the new life, shining and radiant, in which the newly baptised are moving, now through symbols, until the time comes when the symbols disappear and the awful realities are present.⁴¹

Anointing with holy chrism follows, and this, according to Theodore,⁴² is an indication and a sign of the descent of the Holy Ghost in the same way he descended on Christ at his Baptism.

Baptism is immediately followed by the Eucharist: the newly baptised, says Chrysostom, coming out of the sacred waters are immediately led to the awe-inspiring table, the source of a thousand favours: there they partake of the Body and Blood of the Holy Spirit: they put on Christ, and as such, wherever they go, they appear as angels on earth, as brilliant as the shining sun.⁴³

This is the only reference to the Eucharist we find in the Baptismal homilies of St. John Chrysostom, but in those of Theodore and in those of other Fathers, the Eucharist was the theme of more than one homily, for the newly baptised could not be fully initiated in the awe-inspiring mystery of the Body and Blood of the Lord before their Baptism; but this theme is outside the scope of this paper.

The world in which Theodore and St. John Chrysostom lived seems to be a far cry from our world, and yet, perhaps, we might find in the homilies of these two bishops some message for our

bolised by the blood with which the Israelites smeared the lintel and the doorposts of their homes on the night when the avenging angel visited the houses of the Egyptians.

The same high lyrical tone is met with also in the fourth homily when he tells the neophytes of the great joy they have given to the Church who has given them a new life, and when he urges them to look up at St. Paul as their model for a true Christian life. (A. Wenger, o.c., p. 151-199)

⁴¹A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 68. St. John Chrysostom speaks of a royal garment in Catech. IV, 3 (A. Wenger, o.c., p. 183)

⁴²A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 68. There is no reference at all to this post baptismal anointing with holy Chrism in the baptismal catecheses of St. John Chrysostom.

⁴³Cfr. A. Wenger, o.c. catech. II, 27. This is all that St. John Chrysostom has to say about the Eucharistic liturgy which immediately follows the Baptismal rite during the Easter vigil. He also speaks of the Eucharist with characteristic realism in Catech. III, 12-18 (A. Wenger, o.c., p. 158-162).

Theodore devotes two instructions (A. Mingana, o.c., chp. V and VI) to the Eucharist, considering it both as spiritual food and as sacrifice, and he speaks in detail of the Eucharistic liturgy and its symbolism.

times. The newly baptised whom they instructed renounced the false doctrines, the evil amusement and the sins of their times: today, as in the fourth century, the Christian has to face all kinds of sins and evil, and is increasingly allured by amusements he cannot countenance, and so, even today, we are in need of the deep faith of a Theodore and of the moving enthusiasm of a Chrysostom to help us witness Christ's Gospel in the world of today.

JOSEPH LUPI