

“Scripturarum capere sacramentum...”.
Scripture as Sacrament in *Sermon 66,1* of
Pope St. Leo The Great

Salvino Caruana, osa

[In this article, alongside a theological reading of some very significant terms such as res gestae, ordo, sacramentum, and scriptura, in Pope St. Leo The Great's exordium to Sermon 66,1, the author Revd Dr. Salvino Caruana osa, has also dealt with and examined in detail the lexicographical and rhetorical nuances of one of the most refined examples of that fifth century effective and erudite Christian patristic homiletic activity which, in the case under study, also reveals all the intricacies of an elaborate so-called fifth century cursus leonianus].

Pope Saint Leo The Great¹ is the first Occupier of the Seat of the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, of whom the entire *corpus* of *Sermones* has come down to us.

1. The exact place and date of birth of Pope St. LEO the Great has remained unknown. He died on the 10 November, of the year 461CE. Leo's pontificate, next to that of St. GREGORY I, is the most significant and important in Christian antiquity. From an assertion in Leo's *Letter (ep.)* 116 (*PL* 54,1035-1037) addressed to the Christian Roman Empress, PULCHERIA AUGUSTA (Empress between 4th July 414CE to 450CE) on the 21th March 450CE, it is so very clear whether St. CYRIL of Alexandria had written to Leo in the capacity of a Roman deacon, or to Pope CELESTINE (pope between the years 422CE and 432CE). During the pontificate of SIXTUS III (between 422CE and 440CE), Leo was still in Gaul, sent expressly by the Roman Emperor VALENTINIAN III (Christian Roman Emperor of the West between 424CE to 455CE) in order to settle a dispute and bring about a reconciliation between AëTIUS, the chief military commander of the province, and the chief magistrate, ALBINUS. SIXTUS III died on 19 August, 440CE, while Leo was in Gaul. The latter was chosen as his successor. Returning to Rome, Leo was consecrated on 29th of September of the same year, and governed the Roman Church for the next twenty-one years. Leo's chief aim was to sustain the unity of the Church throughout the Empire. In 449CE, an Eastern council had been convoked by THEODOSIUS II for the 1st of August which intended to review the condemnation of EUTYCHES (born c.378CE and died after 454CE). Leo opposed the meeting and defined it as a "*Robber Council*" (*latrocinium Ephesinum*). After the refusal of the president of the council to have Leo's *Letter* read, FLAVIAN, the powerful patriarch of Constantinople, and some other prelates of the East, appealed to the pope. The latter sent urgent letters to Constantinople, particularly to Emperor THEODOSIUS II (Christian Roman Emperor between 408CE to 450CE) and to

The latest critical edition of the authentic *Sermons* of St. Leo The Great, composed by Antonius Chavasse, numbers 97 in all.²

PULCHERIA, urging them to convene a truly recognized general council in order to restore peace to the Church. This general council was held in CHALCEDON in 451CE under MARCIAN, the successor of THEODOSIUS, and Christian Roman Emperor between 450CE and 457CE. It solemnly accepted Leo's dogmatical epistle to FLAVIAN, the *Tomus ad Flavianum* (cf E. SCHWARTZ, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (ACO) 2/2-1, *Concilium universale Chalcedonense* (6 vols.), Berlin-Leipzig 1927-1932, 24-33), as an expression of the Catholic Faith concerning the Person of Christ. The pope only confirmed the decrees of the Council after opposing and requesting the elimination of canon 28, which conceded more power and honour to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, while diminishing the rights of the ancient Oriental patriarchs. But due to a misinterpretation by heretics for the pope's refusal to sign the decrees of the Council on the 21 March 453CE, Leo issued a circular letter confirming and sanctioning the dogmatic definitions of the Council of Chalcedon (see, *Letter (ep.)* 114: *PL* 54, 1027-1032). Leo was no less active in the spiritual guidance of some of the Roman congregations; his sermons, especially, of which ninety-seven genuine examples have been preserved, are remarkable for their profundity, clearness of diction, and elevated style. The first five of these, which were delivered on the anniversaries of his consecration, and manifest his lofty conception of the dignity of his office, as well as his thorough conviction of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, shown forth in so outspoken and decisive a manner by his whole activity as supreme pastor. Of his *Letters*, which are of great importance for church history, 173 have come down to us, thirty of which were *Letters* sent to him. For further biographical details for Leo, the following works are suggested: P. BATTIFOL, "Léon 1er": in, *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*, 218-301; C. COLAFRANCESCHI, "Leone I. papa, detto Magno, dottore della Chiesa, santo": in, *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vol. VII, Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma, Città Nuova editrice 1966, col.1232-1280; G. HUDON, "Léon le Grand": in, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 9 (1976) 597-611; A. LAURAS, "Études sur Saint Léon le Grand" in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 49(1961) 481-499.

2. The whole *corpus* of the *Sermons* of Pope St. Leo The Great as defined by A. CHAVASSE, *Sancti Leonis Magni. Romani Pontificis Tractatus Septem et Nonaginta, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina* (CCL) CXXXVIII/CXXXVIII, Brepols, Turnhout 1973. It is made up of the following arrangement of the *Sermons*:

Sermons 1 – 5: on the recurrence of the anniversary of his consecration;

Sermons 6 – 11: on the *collectae*;

Sermons 12 – 20: on the December fasting;

Sermons 21 – 30: on Christmas;

Sermons 31 – 38: On the Epiphany;

Sermons 39 – 50: On Lent;

Sermon 51: Commentary on the gospel text of the Transfiguration;

Sermons 52 – 70: On the Passion;

Sermons 71 – 72: On the Resurrection;

Sermons 73 – 74: On the Ascension;

Sermons 75 – 77: On Pentecost;

Sermons 78 – 81: On the fasting practice for Pentecost;

Sermons 82 – 84: On the feastday of the Apostles Peter and Paul;

Sermon 85 – on the feastday of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence;

Sermons 86 – 94: On the September fasting;

Sermon 95: a commentary on the Gospel of the Beatitudes;

Sermons 96 - Against the Eutychian heresy.

Sermon 97 – On the Beatitudes.

Pope Leo’s *Sermons* especially, but also his entire literary and pastoral activity, reveal an overarching personal preoccupation and responsibility, that of a shepherd of a flock which has been put into his care. In order to feed it spiritually in the best way he could, Leo engages in his preaching, all his knowledge of dogma and ecclesial institutionalism that could avail him in the fulfilment of this task. However, in his frequent *Sermons* to his Roman congregation, Leo the Great manifests great care in order not to include too much of that theological language and dogmatic formulations in defense of the Church; a task which rather fits within that larger framework of his *sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*, which he actually developed against some of the current heretical and controversial affirmations that were raging throughout Christianity, but with which his audience might be wholly unfamiliar and not *au courant* with. Yet, at the same time, it is obvious that he could not refrain from sporadic allusions to the rather vociferous and serious doctrinal aberrations that marked the period of his pontificate, as these proved to be a source of continual preoccupation that were afflicting the highest pastoral office within the *Catholica*. Nonetheless, his preaching succeeds in maintaining that liturgical composure which behoves the situation...an element of his preaching which makes of his *Sermons* still yet a delight to read.

In order to do justice to the study and appreciation of the greatness and soundness of Leo’s preaching activity, one cannot refrain from reading it *vis-à-vis* those contemporary doctrinal issues which are known to have beleaguered his pontificate, above all, the *Eutychian*³ and the *Nestorian*⁴ heresies, against which

3. EUTYCHES born c.378CE and died after 454CE, was attracted at a very young age to the monastic life and was ordained priest and soon after Archimandrite in 410CE. He was a friend of St. CYRIL of Alexandria (died 444CE). He was also a great friend of CHRISAPHIUS, the potent eunuch of the Christian Roman Emperor THEODOSIUS II (b. 408CE and d. 450CE). Though a staunch opponent to NESTORIUS, yet he adopted the position which denied that after the Incarnation Christ had two natures, thus denying the hypostatic union in the Son of God. Eutyches was known to be a fiery priest with whom it was known to be very difficult to reach any kind of compromise. He was thus accused before the patriarch FLAVIAN (d. 449/450CE) and was condemned by the synod on 22 November 448CE. He succeeded in obtaining a rehabilitating declaration at the *Robber Synod* of Ephesus in 449CE; but, soon after the Emperor THEODOSIUS II died in 450CE, he was again pinned down by the Council of Chalcedon of 451CE.
4. One of the staunchest adversaries of St. CYRIL of Alexandria and author of the heresy condemned explicitly by the Council of Chalcedon of 451CE. Born after 381CE, NESTORIUS was most probably a student of THEODORE bishop OF MOPSUESTIA (b.350CE – d. in 428CE). Due to his fame as a theologian, THEODOSIUS II appointed Nestorius to the seat of Antioch in 428CE. He was very active and efficient in condemning and suppressing heretics (Arians and Macedonians and Pelagians), schismatics, and Jews. Nestorius adopted and employed the theological positions of the school of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (*John of the Golden Mouth*, b. in Antioch ca. 350CE

the *Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon* of 451CE had pronounced the majority of its canons. But, on the other hand, it is also important not to ignore the theological constraints imposed on his preaching activity by the liturgy of the season prescribed by the Roman liturgical calendar in Leo's days. The latter comprised two groups of feasts, two completely different and independent cycles, one celebrating the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the other celebrating Easter.

The Sermons on the Easter celebration

In most of the manuscript collections of the *Sermons* of Pope St. Leo the Great, this cycle of *Sermons* under the general title of *de Passione*, is made up of *Sermons* 52 to 72. In Leo's days, the cycle of feasts celebrating Easter, was made up of Lent, which came to an end with the celebration of the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ. Lent thus incorporated also the Paschal week, which came to be known later as the Holy Week. Most of the patristic preaching recalling the events of the solemn Paschal celebration, was never done without reference to the infancy of Christ. His birth, the Epiphany and the miracles that mark the years of the public life of Jesus up to His Passion, are considered by Leo as being events consummated in the latter as if in the one and unique sacrament of God's mercy.

Leo therefore dedicated, in all, 21 *Sermons* to the celebration of the Passion and the Resurrection of Our Lord. Three of these are *Sermons* on the Paschal Mystery in general; there follow then nine sets of two *Sermons* each set, in which Leo comments on the gospel narrative of the *facts*. The first set of two *Sermons* was preached on the Sunday before Easter, and the other set of two on the following Wednesday. There are five *Sermons* then which were preached by him on the Friday following, or even on the Paschal Vigil, which, in some later manuscript collections, are already considered under the title of *de Resurrectione*, which is, however, not correct. The first four sets of *Sermons*, namely, 52 (on Sunday, 16th March 441CE), 53 (on Wednesday, 19th March 441CE), 54 (on Sunday, 5th April 442CE), 55 (on

– d. 407CE) and formulated out of it, his own personal heretical definition that in the Incarnate Christ, there were two separate persons. The other corollary of his teaching, that therefore Mary, could not be called the *Theotokos*, the *Mother of God*. On the 22 of June 431CE, Nestorius was deposed at the Council of Ephesus (431CE). But in September of 431CE, Nesorius was recalled to his monastery at Antioch by imperial decree. He remained silent for four years, and in 435CE he was exiled to Oasis in Higher Egypt. The date of his death is not known exactly, but he must have died after 450CE.

Wednesday, 8th April 442CE) 56 (on Sunday, 28th March 443CE), 57 (on Wednesday, 31st March 443CE), 58 (on Sunday, 16th April 444CE), 59 (on Wednesday, 19th April 444CE), were preached between the years 441CE and 444CE. *Sermons* 60 (on Sunday, 1st April) and 61 (on Wednesday, 4th April) belong to the year 445CE. *Sermons* 70 (Good Friday, 2nd April 443CE) and 71 (on Holy Saturday, 3rd / 4th April 443CE) also belong to the same series of *Sermons* delivered on Good Friday and Holy Saturday of the same year, whereas *Sermon* 72 belongs to Good Friday (21st April 444CE). The rather later second series of *Sermons* is made up of three sets of two *Sermons* each, 62 (on Sunday, 16th March 452CE), 63 (on Wednesday, 19th March 452CE), 64 (on Sunday, 5th April 453CE), 65 (on Wednesday, 8th April 453CE), 67 (on Sunday, 28th March 454CE), 68 (on Wednesday 31st March 454CE), and of two single *Sermons*, namely 66 (on Good Friday, 10th April 453CE) and 69 (on Holy Saturday, 4th April 454CE).

The importance of this festivity can be seen in the fact that over a third of Leo's *Sermons*, precisely 34 *Sermons*, are dedicated to the preparation and eventual celebration of that which he called *the comely Pasch*,⁵ *the holy festivity*,⁶ *the salutary sacrament*,⁷ *the time of our redemption*,⁸ *the days of our joy*,⁹ in other words, the celebration of those days which are marked by the *mystery of the reparation of fallen man*.¹⁰ All the mysteries of our faith converge on the feast of Easter, which makes it a unique event. Thus, the profound theological link that exists between Lent and Easter in the theology of St. Leo, explains why, in some of the earlier collections of manuscripts of his *Sermons*, it becomes an extremely difficult task to distinguish between *Sermons* made in Lent, during Passion week, that is, from those delivered on the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. All the remaining festivities are meant to be understood only in the light of the Easter event: namely, the celebration of that glorious event when the Son of God came to us in order that He be crucified and rise up again. Easter is not, therefore, like the rest of feasts, a separate one, but it is a solemn feast in which all the mysteries of our salvation are celebrated, so to say, contemporaneously.

5. *Sermon* 58,1: CCL 138A, 339: “*paschale festum tam sublimis esse mysterii*”.

6. *Sermon* 62,1 CCL 138A,376: “*festiuitas dominicae passionis*”.

7. *Sermon* 55,1: CCL 138A,323: “*Passio igitur Christi salutis nostrae continet sacramentum*”.

8. *Sermon* 61,5: CCL 138A,375: “*qui ab ignorantiae tenebris liberati*”.

9. *Sermon* 72,4: CCL 138A, 444: “*nec unquam a paschali festo recedimus*”.

10. *Sermon* 66,1: CCL 138A, 400: “*Deum reparasse quod perierat*”.

Easter encompasses the celebration of all the events of the entire mystery that recalls the Cross of Christ; however, this feast does not exhaust itself in one day, but it is spread throughout the whole week which is called the Holy Week, which also brings Lent to a close. The Holy Passion and the Holy Pasch are, in Leo's conception, to be considered as synonymous expressions; the admirable mystery of the Easter of our salvation, the supreme and omnipotent sacrament of the mercy of God, the festivity of the Passion of our Lord, in which is comprised the day of our Redemption, which is also that day on which we are made participants in the Resurrection of Christ. The glory and the triumph of the Passion of the Lord, the glory of the Cross of Christ, constitute an occasion of such great joy, about which Leo could not remain silent. It was indeed necessary to speak of them, and, in his exuberant enthusiasm, he would burst out in a unique lyrical joy singing the stanzas of the glory of the Cross.

For the redeemed, the celebration of the Passion of Christ, though such a cruel event, in Leo's conception, turns into an occasion of such joy; and as such, far from instilling a sense of misery, must on the contrary, be lived uniquely in the light of the Resurrection of Christ. It will be considered by him as an event that had turned the very evilness of the Jews inflicted upon Jesus Christ, into the service of His great will to forgive; in His mercy He went as far as to make His death reach out even to those who had been the cause of it. St. Leo laid a heavy emphasis on this latter idea so as to make the Lord's prayer to His Father, in favour of the Jews, stand out with even greater sharpness; this is done in order that the words of forgiveness formulated by the Apostle Paul to the *Corinthians*, might stand out with even greater effect: "*they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory had they recognized Him*".¹¹

Thus, according to Pope Leo the Great, the Son of God, made out of the Cross of punishment, a triumphant occasion, the way of the Cross, a kingly path; His Crucifixion is then exalted to the status of such a glorious event, that at the end, it is said, that He had made of Calvary His throne. There is no space for the celebration of pain, Christ does not allow us to cry upon His misery, because once He had let Himself be led to death, He did so in order that He might be able to enter fully into the reign of majesty of His Father. There is no reason for Christians therefore to celebrate the succession of the events of this memorial in any submissive way; if the emotions of the faithful are so great, they need, however, to be purged of all

11. 1 Cor 2:8.

kind of sadness; no melancholic attitude ought to surround the solemnity of the celebration of Easter. It is no longer simply the Jewish People that is experiencing freedom from an earthly tyrant, the Egyptian Pharaoh, but, thanks to this memorial celebration of the New Sacrifice of Our Lord, the New People of God too is again being freed from the hold of that unique tyrant, the Devil. Now Leo preaches this event as if it were the entire universe that is being led out of the captivity of the devil towards freedom.¹²

This unique way of considering and preaching upon the entire event of the Passion, so very different from that which used to be preached before Leo or even after, shows how for him, and for the entire ancient Church, the death of Christ could not be celebrated independently of the Resurrection event; but, on the contrary, it was believed that both events formed one single and unique mystery, that of Easter.

It ought to be noted that two *Sermons* on the *Passion*, namely, *Sermons* 66 and 69, do not correspond to a *preparatory catechesis*, but rather to an attempt at rendering that sort of a *mystagogical presence*. The Passion of Christ was the leading argument of the great solemn celebration. Leo preached about it the Sunday before Easter (later to be known as *Palm Sunday*); he preached about it again on the Wednesday and Friday, and once again, on the Easter Vigil, the 4th April of the year 454CE; among the latter is *Sermon* 69 of the collection. The *Palm Sunday* procession was not yet known up to the time of Leo the Great, nor was the cycle of gospels about the *empty tomb* and the *Resurrection appearances* of the Risen Christ. Both of these two occurrences derived from the Jerusalem liturgy.¹³ The Paschal celebration of the Church of Rome, preserved some rather archaic characteristics, which, some half a century before, St. Jerome had also recalled in a *Letter* to Praesidius in which Jerome, in his typical controversial manner, had it out with Rome against the incipient tradition of the *Laus Cerei*.¹⁴

12. *Sermon* 53,3: CCL 138A,315: “Nos igitur, dilectissimi, quibus Dominus Iesus Christus crucifixus non scandalum (cf *I Cor* 1,23-24), neque stultitia (cf *Gal* 4,31), sed Dei uirtus Deique sapientia est (cf *I Cor* 1,23-24), nos, inquam, spiritale semen Abrahae, non in prole seruitutis geniti, sed in familia libertatis renati, pro quibus in manu forti et brachio excelso (cf *Psalm* 135,12), de oppressione Aegyptiae dominationis eductus uerus et immaculatus agnus immolatus est Christus, amplectamur salutaris Paschae mirabile sacramentum, et ad eius imaginem, qui deformitati nostrae conformis factus est, reformemur”.

13. Cf J. PINELL, *Ad celebrandum Paschale Sacramentum*, Roma 1988, 93.

14. Cf G. MORIN, “Pour l’authenticité de la *Lettre* de S. Jérôme à Praesidius”: in, *Bulletin d’ancienne littérature et d’archéologie chrétienne* 3(1913) 52-60. See *Letter* 155: PL 22,1230ff. PRAESIDIUS had asked St. Jerome in Bethlehem for a poem on the traditional *Laus Cerei* (Hymn in praise of the

Sermon 66,1. A commentary.

Sermon 66, was delivered by Leo the Great on Good Friday which in 453CE, had fallen on the 10th of April. According to Chavasse, this *Sermon* ought to be considered more within the class of an early Christian *tractatus*, belonging to the second collection of *Sermons* preached by Leo the Great between the years 446CE and 461CE. In these particular *Sermons*, the historical background against which St. Leo the Great formulated his preaching, ought to be taken into serious consideration too. Namely, the tone to Pope Leo's preaching at the time is set partially by that notorious event of the insurrection of the Palestinian Monks which took place at the beginning of 452CE, certainly after the promulgation of the definition of Chalcedon, by the Roman Emperor Marcian¹⁵ on the 7th of February 452CE. To this series of

Candle). Jerome does not comply with the request as he thinks that the tradition was rather banal. The tradition seems to have been introduced, in the East, around the fourth century CE, but it was only as late as the fifth century CE that it was introduced as part of the Easter Vigil celebrations in the West.

15. Christian Roman Emperor in the East between 450 and 457CE. Pope St. Leo the Great had come to hear about the revolt from a *Letter* (lost today) of a certain JULIAN of COS (an island on the Asian coast) and one of the legates of Leo to the *Council of Chalcedon* (451CE). During the *Robber Council* of Ephesus of 449CE, JULIAN had seconded ANATOLIUS, bishop, and later on also Patriarch of Constantinople, after the death of FLAVIAN. Leo had tried to extract from JULIAN a condemnation of NESTORIUS and EUTHYCES. In *Letter 107* (PL 54, 1009-1010 of the 22nd May 452CE), Leo had reprimanded JULIAN who had, while in Constantinople, sought allies to support the imposition of *canon 28* of the Council, concerning the primacy of his seat: "*Rescribens itaque ad epistolas tuas, pro ea qua diligo affectione te moneo ut major apud te sit universalis Ecclesiae status*". In his *Letter*, dated 25th of November 452CE, in response to JULIAN, Leo believed that the Imperial hand ought to come down on those responsible for the revolt, and whom one ought, eventually, to banish so that the ignorant ones who had supported them, could be brought back to their senses. He himself had already sent for that *instructio*, *Letter 109* (PL 54, 1014-1018, of the 25th November 425CE) which St. ATHANASIUS of Alexandria had sent to bishop EPICTHETUS, and from whom Leo was expecting a lot. On the 21st of March 453CE, Leo had written *Letter 115* (PL 54, 1031-1035) addressed to the Emperor MARCIAN, on the same topic. He also addressed another *Letter 116* (PL 54, 1035-1037, of the 21st March 453CE) to the Empress PULCHERIA, and another, *Letter 117* (PL 54, 1037-1039 bearing the same date) to JULIAN. He had by now come to know of the crimes committed during the revolt of the Palestinian Monks, and he was also informed of the doctrinal measures adopted against them, and of how the military had been overtaken by the Imperial power. Leo, however, acted always within the limits of his paternal role, as a universally acknowledged spiritual guide, one whose aim was to enlighten the simple souls who had led themselves be drawn away into error; he took it also upon himself to warn ATHANASIUS, THEOPHILUS and CYRIL of Alexandria, that they ought to open their eyes for such wayward doctrines. On the 15th of June 453CE, Leo wrote to Empress EUDOXIA, the widow of the Roman Emperor THEODOSIUS II, who had supported the revolt (*Letter 123*: PL 54, 1060-1061). There is no doubt that Leo had availed himself of the services of the same courier in order to address another

Sermons, preached between Christmas of 452CE and Christmas 453CE, belong the following 28, 38, 64, 65, **66**, 79, 91 and 29.¹⁶

1.1-5. “*Euangelica lectio*,¹⁷ *dilectissimi*,¹⁸ *quae sacratissimam Dominicae passionis reseravit historiam, ita uniuersae Ecclesiae nota est de comuni frequenter auditu, ut rerum gestarum ordinem, tamquam sub uestris oculis*,¹⁹ *singuli quique recolatis*”.²⁰ At the very outset of the *Sermon*, Pope St. Leo the Great expresses a steadfast faithfulness to the actual text of the biblical narrative. Neither Leo, nor any of his contemporaries, ever doubted the authenticity of Sacred Scripture. They thus refrained from constructing erudite or unending explorations of their

long doctrinal *Letter* 124, entitled: *Leo episcopus uniuersis Monachis per Palaestinam constitutis* (PL 54 1061-1068) addressed to the rebellious Palestinian Monks. In this *Letter*, Leo took the opportunity of enlightening these wayward monks, as well as of expressing his serious disapproval and condemnation of the violence and crimes committed by them. In chapter eight of the *Letter*, Leo wrote: “...*ut audio, resultare, exagitando seditionibus inuitates conturbando Ecclesias, nec solum injurias, sed etiam caedes presbyteris atque episcopos inferendo ut prae furore et saeuitia, propositi uestri et professionis sitis immemores*”. On the 9th of January 454CE, in *Letter* 126 (PL 54, 1069-1070) to MARCIAN, Leo expresses his thanks for the re-establishment of peace and unity in Palestine. *Letter* 127 (PL 54, 1070-1073, of the 9th of January 454CE) addressed to JULIAN, and sent on the same day, harps on the same theme of thanks to the latter too. The latter allusion to the Palestinian affair can be read also in *Letter* 136 (PL 54, 1098-1100) addressed to MARCIAN on the 29th of May 454CE.

16. Cf A. CHAVASSE, *Sancti Leonis Magni Romani Pontificis Tractatus*, CCL 138, Brepols, Turnhout 1973, cxcv.
17. In his work *de doctrina christiana*, St. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (b. 354 – d. 430) had already noted that according to the new rules which he was proposing for a truly Christian form of eloquence, the *prologue* of a Christian discourse would best be modelled on the so-called *moderate style*: “*Nam et in grandi genere semper aut paene semper temperata decet esse principi*” (4,23,52: CCL 32,158). Leo makes it clear at the very outset of his *Sermon* that he would not be dealing with the *uerba* of the Gospel text. In other words, that he would not be constructing any type of verbal or literal exegesis on the Passion-text according to St. Matthew, but that he would be dealing, therefore, with the *res*. His preaching on the text assumes the style of a kind of story-telling: *recolere historiam*. The technique of the *captatio beneuolentiae* of the audience, is also present in this *exordium*, one in which Leo compliments his audience that by now they must have had become so familiar with the Gospel text, read by them (or to them) so many times over. This opening section of the *Sermon* reveals all the rhetorical elements that go into the formulation of a discourse, namely, the *exordium*, the *propositum* or *causa* (line 14) and the *ratio*.
18. This is a title of address of a Christian liturgical assembly also frequently used by St. Augustine of Hippo.
19. Leo then passes from the *lectio* (reading) to the *uisio* (seeing) as if the things that had been read to the audience could also be *seen* by them as if on a sort of cinema screen.
20. From the *uisio* then the audience is helped to move on to the *intellegentia* (*recolere*) and then to the *actio*, by which they are urged to follow the example by imitating (*exemplum ad imitandum*).

own, on the Divine Teaching. The Reading, Sacred Scripture (*Euangelica lectio*) is that treasure, old and new, from which Leo draws out his teachings. It has been rightly remarked that Leo was no great exegete.²¹ In his *Sermons* one hardly ever meets with a lengthy text which he comments word for word. His method is that of taking off from some aspect of the text, which had been just read, and which he then clarifies and explains the theological conclusions to be drawn from it about the feast which is being celebrated.

The homiletic account is construed around three moments, namely, the *lectio*, the reading, which subsequently becomes the visual event, “*tamquam sub uestris oculis*”, and, finally, the lively visual narrative (*narratio*) of the Word of God. The two major aspects of these three moments, namely, the *seeing* and the *living of the experience*, were the pillars of patristic preaching. Leo thus continually reminds his listeners that they have not simply heard the sacred story, but that they had, in a certain manner, also witnessed, and experienced a kind of vision of these happenings.²² Thanks to a frequent repetition and hearing of the salvific events contained in the scriptural text, the audience thus becomes so familiar with these events, that they have them in front of the eyes of their mind, in such a way that they can really be said to have witnessed them: “*nota est de comuni frequenter auditu*”. Thanks to the Sacred scripture narrative, the audience believes in what has taken place, and is led to faith thanks to signs and figures in the liturgical celebration of the *rerum gestarum*, and the perennial actualization in the *sacramentum*, which is God’s saving action in time: “*ab initio promissum, in fine redditum, sine fine mansurum*”.²³ This salvific event brought about by the hearing of the Word of God, Leo understands to be the efficacy of the sacrament contained in Sacred Scripture (*sacramentum scripturarum*).

On the other hand, Leo explains to his listeners though living now in the days of the gospel news, yet still they ought to possess a faith more entrenched in Christ, far more nurtured and certainly a more efficacious one, both as regards intensity and extension (*capaciores*).²⁴

21. Cf P. BATTIFOL, “Leon I le Grand”, in: *Dictionnaire de Theologie catholique (DTC)* 9(1924) 282.

22. *Sermon* 70, 1: CCL 138A,426: “*ut unicuique audientium ipsa lectio quaedam facta sit uisio*”.

23. *Sermon* 22.1: CCL 138,90.

24. Cf S.MARSILI, *Mistero di Cristo e liturgia nello Spirito*, Città del Vaticano, 1986,125.

The concepts of *universality* and *totality* in the *Sermons* of Pope Leo, are expressed by terms such as *omnis*, *totus*, *universus*, *multiplico*, *dilato*, *diffundo*, *plenitudo*; these concepts are also uppermost in the Leo’s theological convictions. They assume the idea of an absolute numerical quantity. Some other terms accompanying the former are: *perfectus*, *totale*, or else, the pronoun *quislibet*, equivalent to *omnis*, which is expressly made use of in opposition to that type of temporal fragmentation. All of these verbal techniques help to bring out, with even greater intensity, the idea of an absoluteness rendered also by the use of adjectives such as: *aeternus*, *perpetuus*, *sumus* and *unicus*. Underneath these concepts, lies Leo’s conviction of the necessity of the recognition of the absoluteness of God which is to be proclaimed. Whereas, when under the same concepts, the idea of *totality* is implied, these concepts are meant to be with reference to the Church. Leo’s preaching effort is directed at making his audience aware of, as well as participative of, that grand event *in fieri*; it is to this effect that he thus makes use of terms such as *augeo*, and *impleo*. It is as if he means to touch the incomprehensibility of the immensity of the ends of time that he seems to pass from the past to the present and the present to the future.

1. (5-8). “*Nec parum astimandi sunt profecisse, qui de his quae audiere²⁵ non dubitant, ut etiamsi nondum liquide²⁶ aliquod ualeant²⁷ Scripturarum capere²⁸ sacramentum, firmissime tamen credant nullum²⁹ in diuinis litteris esse mendacium*”. The text recalls the words of the Risen Christ to the doubting apostle, Thomas: “*The Lord told him: you believe because you have seen me; How happy are those who have not seen me and have nonetheless believed*”.³⁰ Leo may also have been

25. A prolongation of the verb *audire*. William J. HALLIWELL acknowledges that: “*The only evidence for his distinguished education is the breadth of his knowledge and the purity of his literary style. But in spite of the lavish praise unanimously accorded his writings, his language and style have not yet been systematically examined*”, *The Style of Pope St. Leo the Great*, The Catholic University of America Press (*Patristic Studies*, 59), Washington D.C. 1939, ix.
26. This is clearly an Augustinian use of the term. Leo must have picked it up from Augustine’s work *CXXIV Tractatus in Iohannem Euangelium CXXIV*, tr. 53,8: CCL 36,455: “*si quis autem istam quaestionem liquidius et melius nouit se posse et confidit exponere, absit ut non sim paratior discere quam docere*”. Augustine had appealed to the sense of humbleness required *vis-à-vis* the greatness of the Word of God, and the understanding of the divine Scriptures. The Latin adverbs ending in “*e*” belong to a rather Late Latin usage.
27. This indicates how fond Leo was of using such a common rhetorical element of the rhetorical technique of *alliteration*, in this case by the use of the letter “*l*” in *liquide ... aliquod ... ualeant*.
28. The vowel “*i*” of *capire* had to be changed in order to rhyme with *audiere*.
29. *Nullum*, is a negative term expressing an numerical absolute quantitative.
30. Jn 20:29.

thinking of *Isaiah* in the manner read by St. Augustine: “*If you will not believe, you will not understand*”.³¹ Leo emphasizes the fact that faith ought not to rest on any philosophical argumentation, neither on the results of any kind of human wisdom. The heavenly doctrine (*doctrina caelestis*) does not need the support of words (*auxilium uerborum*). His is a doctrine supported by the words of the Apostle Paul: “*See to it, then, that no one enslaves you by means of the worthless deceit of human wisdom, which comes from the teachings handed down by men and from the ruling spirits of the universe, and not from Christ*”.³² Leo lacks maybe, both the genius and the wish to scrutinize the mysteries of the universe as proposed by revelation. Nor does he reveal any kind of *penchant* towards philosophical musings; on the contrary, throughout his preaching, Leo assumes a typically patristic lack of sympathy towards that verbosity of worldly wisdom (*mundana sapientia*); he strongly exhorts his audience to flee from those wordy and mundane arguments of heretics who like snakes, simply attempt at ensnaring them in order to corrupt their sound faith.³³ Though Leo is considered to be a great man of letters of his age, however it has been considered very difficult to guess his literary and ecclesiastical sources. The point of departure for his *Sermons* is always the scriptural text, and it is from that source too that he draws out his theological explanations. Like most Fathers of the Church, Leo too shares that major preoccupation of patristic preaching, namely, the nurturing of his flock with sound Christian moral teaching and doctrine which will sustain them in their everyday toil against evil.

1. (8-14). “*Quia ergo sinceræ fidei promissa est intellegentiæ plenitudo,*³⁴ *erigat*³⁵ *se ad promerendam sancti Spiritus eruditionem,*³⁶ *inluminatarum*³⁷ *mentium*

31. Is 8:9. Cf also AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Sermon* 43, *On the words of Isaiah*: “If you do not believe you will not understand”: CCL 41, 508-512.

32. Col 2:8.

33. Cf *Sermon* 69,5: CCL 138A,423: “*Fugite mundanæ argumenta doctrinæ et vipereæ hæreticorum vitæ conloquia*”.

34. One cannot help missing the point of Leo’s insistent use of a certain vocabulary, one which lays emphasis on *universality*. Cf also Col 2:2, and Heb 10:22.

35. The term *erigere*, to rise up to, is used by Leo to signify the act of *rising up to* the situation of learning from the Holy Spirit and to the understanding and embracing of the Word of God through faith. The term also alludes to a sort of a *resurrection from the dead* effect thanks to the power of the Word of God.

36. Leo completes the rhetoric of this *exordium* by means of another classical rhetorical element, namely, that of the *paideia* of Christ. The idea that the hearing of the Gospel narrative within the liturgical celebration, becomes that *eruditionem*, an erudition imparted in the new Christian school, the *schola Christiana*, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

37. *Inluminatarum*, in the sense of an *enlightening of*, an *inspiration of*, the mind, which, when used

*vigor, et non contentus sit facti ordinem nosse, nisi etiam ipsam rationem impensae sibi pietatis inspiciat, ut auctorem suum humana natura,*³⁸ *sciendo quantum ab eo sit dilecta, plus diligit*”. According to Leo, a sincere faith succeeds in overcoming all kinds of incomprehension one meets with in the Scriptures. Augustine too had harped on the need of such a type of faith where the *understanding* of the Scriptures is concerned.³⁹ It is the work of the Holy Spirit (*sancti Spiritus eruditionem*) to guide us and to open up to us the understanding of the profundity of the Scriptures, as well as towards that fullness of understanding (*plenitudo intelligentiae*). The understanding of the exact order of the events narrated, namely the *ordo facti*, will not suffice for a better understanding of Scripture; but, on the contrary, the reader must also look for the meaning of the text which is opened up to us by the divine Love (*ratio pietatis*). For Leo, the very authority of the scriptural text will illuminate our minds and convince us – because the Word of God contains in itself also a sacramental efficacy.

Leo was a sharp and seasoned preacher of the Word of God. He knew very well that there was yet another step to be made in the narration of the facts in order that the hearers, helped by the action of the Holy Spirit, may come to adhere to the demands of Scripture fully, and, subsequently enlightened by it, may wholeheartedly embrace the moral contents of the Word. His hearers were not meant simply to relish in (*delectare*) the hearing of the Word, but were eventually to be moved (*movere*) to put it into action in their daily life as Christians. Dogmatic truths, that is, that which is confessed in the *Symbol of faith*, as well as the moral truths, all pointed towards that great commandment of the *love* of God.

It is in this way that St. Leo conducts his hearers from the *lectio* to the *visio*, from *fides* to *intelligentia*, from *scientia* to *dilectio*, namely, to that love of Christ. It is in this way that ancient Christian preachers believed that Scripture was so intimately linked to the liturgical celebration being conducted and celebrated. St.

within the parameters of Classical Latin, can also be taken in the sense of *accendere*. Here, however, Leo uses it in a yet wider sense, namely, that of a mental or a moral enlightenment of Christians by the Holy Spirit, aimed to help them arrive at a correct understanding of Scriptures.

38. Whenever Leo speaks of the *humana natura*, he does not mean an *individual human nature*. In the case of Christ, it is stated that He had taken upon Himself not an individual human nature but: “*reconciliandam auctori suo naturam generis adsumpsit humani*”. That is, Christ assumed a nature proper to humans, but one which He transformed into a far more complete and total form; cf also *Sermon* 21,1: *CCL* 138, 85.
39. Cf *In Ioh. Eu. CXXIV*, tr.16,3: *CCL* 36,167: “*Euangelium audiuimus, euangelio consensimus, per euangelium in Christum credidimus; nulla signa uidimus, nulla exigimus*”.

Leo knew extremely well that the more immediate task of his preaching was that of bringing about an *actualization*, that rendering immediate and *there and then*, in the form of a strong appeal to that spiritual salvation, the *pro nobis* element of all Christian preaching, achieving that important link between the liturgical reading of the Word of God and its immediate salvific efficacy, *hic et nunc*. In other words, the sequence in this typically *narrative theology* of St. Leo the Great, is that from practice, *praxis*, the next step was towards *action*, one which expressed itself in love, *caritas*.

1. (14-18). "*Miserendi enim nostri causam Deus nisi in sua bonitate non habuit, et mirabilior est secunda hominum generatio quam prima conditio, quia plus est in nouissimis saeculis Deum reparasse quod perierat, quam a principio fecisse quod non erat*". Leo's immediate preoccupation turns now to that mystery of the divine will for our salvation, namely, the patristic declaration of the ineffability of the soteriological and Christological implications of God's will to save us, *deus pro nobis*. According to Leo, the nature of God is goodness itself; Leo declares himself more prone to allow someone to speak inadequately about God, than to define Him in a manner which does not thoroughly befit Him. Man would have remained with a wholly inadequate knowledge of God had God Himself not deigned to reveal Himself to us. The Scriptures are also the vessels containing this revelatory will of God, in that they were composed under divine inspiration.

Leo does not possess that refined and theoretical theological language: he holds to, and maintains, the traditional and sound data of revelation. His soteriological teaching revolves around that scriptural basic affirmation and belief of a creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), from which he derives the other theological and soteriological conviction that it was for our salvation, *pro nobis*, that Christ assumed a human nature like ours. God, through the Word created man in a wonderful way, but also rehabilitated fallen humanity in a much more admirable way, that is, in Jesus Christ. Leo is a theologian who opts for concrete and realistic expressions and speaks of the frailty of the human flesh (*infirmetas carnis*), of that submissive situation we were thrown down into (*humilitate nostra*), and of the resulting infirmity of our human nature (*naturae humanae infirmitate*). He harps on the need for God to restore that which perished: *Deum reparasse quod perierat*. Leo is well aware of the situation of the moral fragility of fallen human nature when challenged by the power of the passions, by temptations and by sin. He then wisely assumes that typical tone of his deeply felt paternal and pastoral role of correction and counselling of the faithful and only makes use of rhetoric when he believes it would avail that

pedagogical approach that helped to impress well into the minds of his spiritual children the necessity of living a right way of Christian life.

Leo’s theology of salvation rests on that traditional, sound, and inelaborate early patristic soteriological belief of our ontological participation in Christ’s assumption of our fallen human form,⁴⁰ which had been created by God, but which is now continually being re-created and regenerated in Christ. Thus, according to Leo, in order for man to be saved, and that he may be reinstated in that original integrity he was created in, he does not simply need to be pardoned by an act of good will on the part of God, but he has to be freed from that situation of inferiority into which he has fallen *vis-à-vis* God.

One cannot help missing out on the point that Leo too adopts that well-known patristic strong theological belief that God acted when the time was ripe for man to be saved by Christ: “*quia plus est in nouissimis saeculis Deum reparasse quod perierat*”.⁴¹ We are not allowed to inquire into the reasons why God thought that the time was ripe to intervene, that is, in Leo’s belief: *in ultima mundi aetate*. The Fathers of the Church believed that God had always showed compassion towards humanity and, in any case, He had never come too late to save man through Christ; in other words, that salvation and the eventual redemption of man in Christ, had been in God’s mind ever since the creation of humanity.⁴²

1. (18-23). “*Libertatem itaque innocentiae naturalis, quam primorum patrum prevaricatione*⁴³ *perdidimus,*⁴⁴ *nulla per se sanctorum praecedentium merita receperunt, quia lata in transgressores*⁴⁵ *sententia, omnem progeniem captiuae*

40. Cf also *Sermon* 21,3: CCL 138,88: “*Agnosce. O christianae, dignitatem tuam, et diuinae consors factus naturae*”.

41. Cf also 1 Pt 1,20; 1 Jn 2,18; and cf also AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *In epistolam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem* 3,2,18: PL 35. :”*Pueri nouissima hora est...*”.

42. Cf St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *In epistula ad Romanos*, Hom. 10,1: PG 60,476.

43. This is a late classical Latin exaggerated rendering for sin as a transgression. Leo is no innovator of *neologisms* but prefers to hold to the Christian Latin renderings used by others before him. The rhetorical technique of this *periphrasis* is also known as *autonomasia*, which, in this case, Leo could have simply termed, *original sin*. This is also known as *epanaphora*.

44. Indeed a very rare fourfold, the maximum number possible, of the alliteration of words beginning with the same letter, in this case, the letter “p”! The allusion is to original sin. A. CHAVASSE, has *patrum* instead of *parentum*: CCL 138A, 400.

45. Leo could have used again the term *praevicatoros* for sinners, but indeed he is also a prolific writer and has also a broad semantic knowledge at his command.

*posteritatis*⁴⁶ *obstrinxit, et nemo extitit exors*⁴⁷ *a damnatione, quia nullus fuit liber a crimine*". The Augustinian train of thought in Leo's theology of grace and free will in this section of *Sermon* 66, is quite evident. The image of God in man rendered the latter a mirror of divine perfection; this state was soon to be denied him by sin; hence no one can be justified on his own personal merits. Fallen humanity lay under the domination of sin, and that of the evil one; it would have had no way of escape had not the Son of Man come to the aid of miserable humanity.⁴⁸ This negative situation became a contagious disease through the transmission of original sin at the very moment of generation. Augustine of Hippo too had argued on the same lines regarding the contagious effects resulting in the act of human procreation.⁴⁹

Leo too, like Augustine, believes that in order to save humanity, the Mosaic legalism (*doctrina legalis*) was not enough; though, on the other hand, it had come to the aid of the Just under the Old Dispensation. According to Leo, the so-called Just of the Old Testament had only hoped in Christ and had been saved too. They had hoped in future things, those same that we believe have come about.⁵⁰ Now, in the case of the New Dispensation, however, the *veritas redemptionis* was needed. God had foreseen, and justly demanded that, after the fall, redemption from the hold of the devil would have to come about thanks to someone who was born without sin or the product of carnal procreation from man: "*ut ad carnalis generationis abolenda contagia, esset regenerandis origo sine semine criminis*".⁵¹

1. (23-28). "*Sed redemptio Saluatoris destruens opus diaboli, et rumpens*

46. The idea of the *universality* and *totality* of the fallen state is rendered by such terminology as: "*omnem progeniem captivae posteritatis*".
47. A rare example of an intricate and elaborate alliteration (*extitit exors*) known as *parechesis*, in which words with similar sound are disposed near each other.
48. "*Letali uulnere tabefacta*" cf *Sermon* 24,2: CCL 138,111.
49. The following are the major works in which Augustine dealt with the themes of original sin, human procreation, and the grace of God, namely, *de gratia Christi et de peccato originali*: CSEL 42, 125-206; *de gratia Testamenti Noui*: CSEL 44,155-234; cf J. CHÉNÉ, *La Théologie de Saint Augustin. Grâce et Prédestination*, Éditions Xavier Mappus, Lyon 1961.
50. Cf *Sermon* 23,3: CCL 138,105; s. 55,1: CCL 138A,323.
51. Leo the Great, *Sermon* 27,2: CCL 138,133.

*uincula peccati, ita magnae pietatis suae disposuit*⁵² *sacramentum*,⁵³ *ut usque ad consummationem quidem mundi praefinita generationum plenitudo decurreret, sed renouatio originis per iustificationem indiscretae fidei ad omnia retro saecula pertinere*”. The double finality of Christ’s Incarnation is here expressed very clearly. It is thanks to God’s loving wisdom, to His ineffable goodness, and to His will to redeem the fallen state of man, that brought about as a result the undoing of the work of the devil: *destruens opus*⁵⁴ *diaboli*,⁵⁵ this was the backdrop against which man’s salvation had been brought about.

The more significant theological argument in this opening section of *Sermon* 66, is Leo’s affirmation that those who had believed in God before the coming of Jesus Christ, could have been saved thanks to prefigurative signs, which God often laid in their paths in His will to save all. Those among them who had shown faith and believed, and accepted the divine promises, would have also benefited of the

52. Leo the Great had picked up and adopted the term *dispositio* (which is the Latin verb *disponere* and the resulting theological term *dispensatio* (Gk. *oikonomia*), from the Latin version of the *Letters* of St. Paul. He could also have traced the term *dispositio* from some Old Testament sources such as, for instance, Wis 7,17; 7,19; Qoh 33,34; Prov 24,6. In the New Testament, the term *dispono* is also found in Lk 22,20; 1 Cor 11,34; Tit 1,5. Leo’s source is certainly derived from that ancient art of Latin oratorical culture, as it was a technical term indicating the way an orator was to place the various parts of his speech in a strictly defined order so as his discourse could be constructed in a harmonic way so that it may attain its final scope, that of persuasion of the audience. The theological and biblical significance of the term (namely, the diverse manifestations of the divine will in relation to the world and the divine will and plan to save man), however, refers to that unique and unfailing divine design which regulates harmoniously the historical occurrences in space and time, and in such a way that everything reveals His unique will which, though it appears in a variety of designs, produces only that unique end originally willed by Him.
53. “*magnae pietatis suae disposuit sacramentum*”: this accumulation and diffuseness of terms to embellish the presentation of a rather straightforward thought (in rhetoric described also as a *periphrasis*) is known as a *circumlocution*. This is also a frequently recurring terminology in ecclesiastical Latin meant to indicate *mysteries* or *miracles* (cf 1 Tim 3,16).
54. The Latin term *opus* or the verb *operor*, though in the *Sermons* or *Letters* of Leo the Great may be found couples with subjects other than God, or more properly Christ, nonetheless, emphasizes that action which brings out the power of the actor. God’s (Christ’s) works reveal a power which cannot be attributed to natural or human causes but is the effect of divine omnipotence. The completely divine operative power with which God (Christ) brought about the *opus salutis*, has also been given us through grace by which we too become participative of this great work. Alongside the cosmic vision of the act of God who saves humanity, we are thus led to contemplate also that divine salvific action which has penetrated into the deepest situation of each and every single human person.
55. Cf also AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem* 3,8: PL 35,2001f.

grace of divine mercy, which was later on revealed in all its fulness and wholeness in Jesus Christ. It is also Leo's belief, which he repeats to exasperation, as we shall show further on, that God had willed so from eternity that salvation should reach everyone.

1. (28-32). "*Incarnatio quippe Uerbi et occisio ac resurrectio Christi, uniuersorum fidelium salus facta est et sanguis unius iusti hoc nobis donauit, qui eum pro reconciliatione mundi credimus fusum, quod contulit patribus, qui similiter credidere fundendum*". It is in the final sentence of the opening section of Leo the Great's *Sermon* 66 that the theologian *par excellence* of the Incarnation of Christ, shows himself to be also the staunch upholder and preacher of the enormous soteriological significance of the union of the two complete natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ. It is a truth upon which he constructed his entire Christological teaching and preaching especially during the liturgical season of Lent. The emphasis on the soteriological concern in the existence of Christ, Leo considered it to be a necessary corollary for the life of all humanity after the divine just decree, which our parents Adam and Eve had merited for their refusal, had been inflicted. The conclusion would be, namely, that Jesus had therefore come to us to suffer. Leo teaches his belief that the mystery of the Word who became man had been decreed primarily and above all in view of our redemption; in the sense that, had Adam remained faithful to God's will and not sinned, the Son of God would not have become incarnate. That was the reason why the news of the divine promise of salvation had been communicated already at the very beginning of time, but after the fall.⁵⁶

Thus, the soteriological argument becomes the key to the understanding of Leo's teaching even with regards to the Incarnation. Redemption is strongly bound to the doctrine of the Incarnation, as this belief Leo derives from the former. But it does not mean that Leo believes that the Incarnation alone would have been sufficient for our salvation; on the contrary, he affirms that it is in the Passion of Christ that we are to look for the actual salvific content: "*passio igitur Christi salutis nostrae*

56. *Sermon* 21.1: CCL 138.85: "*Dei namque Filius, secundum plenitudinem temporis quam diuini consilii inscrutabilis altitudo disposuit, reconciliandam auctori suo naturam generis adsumpsit humani, ut inuentor mortis diabolus per ipsam quam uicerat uinceretur... non in sua maiestate, sed in nostra humilitate congregitur, obiciens ei eandem formam eandemque naturam, mortalitatis quidem nostrae participem, sed peccati totius experti*".

continet sacramentum”.⁵⁷ Jesus saves us through His death, which becomes an authentic sacrificial act. It is therefore a determining redemptive incarnation; it was necessary in view of the demands of redemption. In other words, the coming of the Lord had as its purpose our salvation. It is the great act of God and at the same time the culmination of the whole of the history of humanity. The centuries that preceded it too, had testified and pointed towards this miraculous event as being the centre of all history. God had abided His time until man was ready to understand and appreciate better His designs for salvation.

The hypostatic union had rendered possible the Passion of Christ, so too it had rendered necessary the Resurrection. To the events and the theology of the Passion and the Resurrection of the Lord, Leo consecrated twenty-one *Sermons*. Three of these *Sermons* are on the mystery of Easter in general; the remaining eighteen are *Sermons* which he preached during nine days, two sermons per day, and in which he commented upon the gospel account of the *facts*. The idea that dominates the entire preaching of Leo during this period is the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ...but which includes also the Resurrection. The Cross of Christ, which is at the centre of the whole celebration, is also described as the glorious Cross of Christ. The real and true Easter is the death of Christ and not simply the Resurrection, unless obviously this is regarded as the consequence of the death of Christ and has to remain separated from it.

Easter includes all that which is to be celebrated in order to commemorate the Cross of Christ: this event is not celebrated in one single day only, but throughout the whole of Holy Week towards which the whole of Lent is aimed. The Holy Passion and the Holy Pasch are thus, for Leo, synonymous; the great mystery of the Easter of our salvation, that unique and supreme sacrament of divine goodness and mercy, has got to be seen also as the festivity of the Passion of Our Lord. And, in the final analysis, these days are all meant to culminate in the day of our redemption in which we are made participants of the Resurrection of Christ. The glory and triumph of the Passion of the Lord (Leo underlines the reality of a triumphant Cross, the

57. Sermon (s.) 55,1: CCL 138,323. In other words, according to B. STUDER: “Only as man was Christ able to adapt his proclamation of God to human understanding; Only (sic!) as man could he give them an example of patience and humility; only as man was he able to heal his fellow human beings from their frailties and to cover their fickleness and anguish with his firm power; above all, only as man could he die, and only as a descendant of Adam he could suffer death on behalf of posterity”, see: *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, Collegeville, Minnesota 1993, 209.

triumph of the sufferings of Christ) have become an occasion of joy about which Leo cannot keep silent and in some sermons bursts out in singing the exaltation of the Holy Cross.

This way of looking at the Passion of Our Lord – quite a different one from that which we often encounter throughout the whole of the patristic era – reveals that for Leo, as well as for the entire Church in the West, the death of Christ could not be considered separately from the Resurrection: both belong to the one and same mystery, both are considered as a prolongation of the one and same mystery, namely, of Easter: “*Incarnatio quippe Uerbi et occisio ac resurrectio Christi*”.

The Resurrection of Christ is considered as the last event in Christ’s struggle with evil and sin. It is also the final victory over death and sin. Uppermost in Leo’s preaching is the idea that Christ’s victory is only the result of His own annihilation in death, but a death which had been transformed into a triumphant event in that it is affirmed that He had laid His life in the hands of the divine power (*uirtus*). The victory in the Resurrection was not given Him in view of a personal prize over the devil and sin, nor as a prize for His great struggle against the evil one, and the later complete submission to the Father’s will, but it was meant to be seen as the beginning of a new situation, a new status, one which He had won for Himself and for the whole of humanity. Leo envisages salvation only and uniquely thanks to the Incarnation.⁵⁸

Scripture in Sermon 66,1.

In the very opening sentence of his *Sermon* Leo confesses an unwaivering submission and faithfulness to the Word of God. Sacred Scripture for Leo, and

58. For some more detailed studies outlining Leo’s doctrine of the two natures in the one person of Christ, his peculiar soteriology, the patristic doctrine of Christ’s *kenosis* as developed by Leo, and the theory of Divine Impassibility, the following are some of the standard and basic works: Geoffrey, D. DUNN, “Suffering Humanity and Divine Impassibility: the Christology in the Lenten Homilies of Leo the Great”: in, *Augustinianum* XLI/1 (Iunius 2001) 257-271; ID, “Divine Impassibility and Christology in the Christmas Homilies of Leo the Great”: in, *Theological Studies* 62/1 (March 2001) 71-85; A. GRILLMEIER, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Part Two, London 1966; John, J. O’KEEFE, “Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology”: in, *Theological Studies* 58/1 (March 1997) 39-60; J. PELIKAN, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (100-600). The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago – London 1971; B. STUDER, *Trinity and Incarnation*. The Faith of the Early Church, (edited by LOUTH Andrew), The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1993.

for most of his contemporary Catholic preachers, had become that unfathomable treasure from which he could draw out an infinity of truths and witnesses to truth, to the *Regula fidei*. Coupled then with a highly expressive liturgical sacramental celebration, referred to in the narration of the history of the events of our salvation, the *ordo res gestae*, it became the most privileged moment from which the preacher could launch his sermon projected for the audience as if on a invisible screen: “*Euangelica lectio...ut rerum gestarum ordinem tamquam sub uestris habitum oculis singuli quique recolatis*”.

Leo assured his audience that they should not think that they were not making progress in their simple faith because they felt that they were not completely grasping the basic tenets of the *regula fidei*. Having opted to accept wholeheartedly that the divine Scriptures cannot contain anything contrary to the *Regula fidei*, they could then rest assured of the consequent understanding of them too. They would certainly be led to the fullness of understanding of these basic tenets should they rise up to the lofty teaching imparted in the school of the Holy Spirit Himself.

True to the typical technique of the commentaries in early Christian patristic preaching, Leo harps on the unique religious qualities of the progress in faith in those who not only do not doubt the Word of God, but, on the contrary, are firmly entrenched in the belief that in the divine scriptures there can be no sort of lie. It is in the following section of the opening paragraph of his sermon that Leo passes on immediately to the affirmation of the basic biblical tenets of the Christian faith contained in the events of the Old Testament (namely, the divine promises of a regeneration of humanity after the events of the creation of man by God, and man’s fall⁵⁹) that point to, and confirm, the divinely revealed events of the present argument of his *Sermon*, the paschal celebration of Christ as the Lamb of God.⁶⁰

Leo reminds his audience that the frequent hearing, reading, or narration of the historical biblical account of our salvation and redemption, as well as of the historical details contained in the narrative of the Passion of Christ, there lies an assurance that in the very reading of the Word of God, there is the unfailling seal of the author of these events Himself, God. Leo’s sermon could then serenely march on from the scripture reading itself to a *quaedam uisio*, as if, in a certain fashion, they were experiencing a vision of these happenings yet again taking place under

59. Cf *Sermon* 66,1: “*Miserendi enim nostri causam Deus...secunda hominum generatio...reparasse quod perierat*”.

60. Id., “*Incarnatio quippe Uerbi et occisio et resurrectio Christi...*”.

their very eyes and now, *hic et nunc*. This is how Leo, together with most of his contemporary Christian writers and preachers, “were concerned to present in their entirety the events of a former time, to tell the entire history of salvation. This ‘narrative theology’ is to be seen above all in catechetical instruction or in works that draw their inspiration from catechesis.”⁶¹ In this particular case under scrutiny, Leo constructs his *narratio* around that single and unique event, namely, the Incarnation-Passion-Resurrection of Christ, but he elucidates it with several other biblical data in order to make all his effort to render intelligible this fundamental datum, the *narratio euangelica*. The primary focus of all his efforts in this *Sermon*, as well as in his entire homiletic corpus in which the Christological argument is at stake, is the insistence on the union of the divine and the human in the One Person of Jesus Christ, in the elucidation of which he starts basically with an account of the *res gestae* of Jesus in order to move on then to an explanation by way of particular biblical texts.

A sincere faith is required in order to comprehend fully the events of this account of the sacred history of our salvation. In order to understand Scripture according to a right disposition, a wholehearted submission on the part of the hearers is required; Leo then invokes the ancient principle of the vigorous light of the Holy Spirit that is shed on such hearers of the Word of God. It is thanks to the enlightening power of this Spirit, that the believer will not be content simply in understanding the *ordo res gestae* of Scripture, or the elements of the creed, or simply of the moral truths contained therein. But, above all, the reader advances far more if he lets himself be led by the commandment of love: “*sciendo quantum ab eo sit dilecta, plus diligit*”.

Leo has already declared the power of the sacrament that is being celebrated, to be operative and dependent on the very choice of the scripture reading itself. The words (*Euangelica lectio*) of the scripture text are not the most important element of this realization, but the major emphasis is on the *res*, the *ordo rerum gestae* (sequence of things), namely, the succession of events as reported in the Gospel narrative itself. In these *Sermons* on the Passion, Leo rightly emphasizes his effort to place this *sacrament* within the framework of the Scripture narration of the events of the history of man’s salvation as a whole, and to elucidate the loving and saving action of God the Father that would restore that which was lost (*reparasse quod perierat*), the self-giving of His Son Jesus Christ (*ita magnae pietatis suae disposuit sacramentum*).

61. Cf B. STUDER, osb & Angelo di BERARDINO, osa, (editors), *History of Theology. The Patristic Period*, volume 1, 344.

In his preaching on the Passion narrative Leo would like to go on with the simple narration of the events of salvation history. Although he does succeed in paraphrasing the whole text as he goes on with his sermon, yet it is evident that he feels the pressure of the situation, that is, of the liturgical background of the celebration of the event. Leo however reveals an excellent grasp of the entire intricacies of the theology of the Cross of Christ. He is a seasoned pastor of souls, bishop, but also a well-prepared theologian, with the result that his *Sermons* became sort of small theological as well as dogmatic treatises.

Leo is very much aware of the *economy of salvation* contained in the narration of these historical *res gestae* within the liturgical framework. Within such a context in which narrative theology is embedded in the biblical data, Leo makes all his efforts to render intelligible the fundamental datum, namely, the *narratio euangelica*, the *lectio euangelica* of the holy Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The primary focus of such a *narratio*, however, is always on the unique nature of the union of the divine and the human in Christ, beginning basically with the *ordo res gestae* of Jesus in order to move on then to an explanation thanks to particular biblical texts. Leo couches the *lectio euangelica* within the framework of a journey of faith. The *theologia*, the *res credendae*, become an *oikonomia*, the basic elements of our journey towards our salvation in Christ. These scriptural events which are to be known and believed (*res cognoscendae et credendae*), are to become also those basic tenets of our faith which lie at the basis of our hope and love (*caritas*). They are those things which we ought to hope for and love (*res sperandae et amandae*), which are then to be translated into an imitation of Christ in our daily life (*res gestae - res agendae*).

Sacrament in Sermon 66,1.

Leo uses the term "sacrament" in the sense of a rite thanks to which a person or a thing is consecrated in view of a sacred event, or in view of some sort of divine intervention in the life of that person. He makes use of the term to indicate the whole asset of the events of the Incarnation, insofar as it shows God's entire plan which was realized in the human birth and life of the Son of God, for man's redemption and salvation. Foremost and above all other works of God's mercy towards man, is the fact that Christ, on the Cross, gave up His life for mankind (*pro nobis*). The Cross of Christ therefore becomes the true sacrament of the altar which was prefigured in the salvific sacrifice for entire humanity: "*Cui sacramento cum se uitae auctor*

*inpenderet...*⁶² For Leo the Great, therefore, the term *sacrament* is, first of all, a sign of a salvific event of God, and, secondly, an efficient and significant sign, even more efficient in the sense that it signifies future events. Christ besides being in Himself a salvific event (action), is at the same time *sacramentum* and *exemplum*, an expression which is read no less than eight times in Leo's *Sermons*. Leo sees in this term a sort of double remedy, namely, that it is thanks to Christ who is Himself a sacrament that we are led to Him, and, secondly, that this becomes in us a salvific action when we imitate Him.

The sacrament is always considered as an external action through which the divine salvific action transpires (as a matter of fact, the sacrament is an efficacious sign of salvation). Faith is the medium by which we are delivered from the powers of darkness and are freed from the chains of that old captivity: "*tantoque sacramento eruti de potestate tenebrarum, et ab antiquae captivitatatis uinculis absoluti*".⁶³ Christ's example (*exemplum*) together with the divine action, become the model for us to imitate. But, according to Leo, the *exemplum* is not derived from the external act of Christ, in which one has to consider an interior salvific intention, but it derives from an external salvific action, that kind of help and mercy which we rightly ought to pray God for, and in which one recognizes a model for imitation for salvation: "*cuius auxilium et misericordiam in omnibus recte cupimus, inplorare debemus*".⁶⁴

A sacrament, therefore, consists in human signs and actions, in which the salvific act of God is not simply reflected, but in which the effective powers of salvation are visible since they are the result of those actions performed by God made Man in Christ, a human person like us, but endowed with divine powers. Thus Leo argues that thanks to human actions, Christ effects in us divine realities. This is the concept of the Incarnation with which Leo feels empowered to believe and teach that the whole man, the true man, the perfect man, as well as the entire divinity, truly human, and perfectly divine, are united in the one divine person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. It is thanks to the sacrament which becomes an example for our actions, that these reflect also divine actions in us.

The sacrament of salvation is not encompassed and exhausted in any single past historical narrative, but it is still present and operative in time. We are also made participants in, and of this historical event in time, but this does not mean

62. *Sermon* (s.) 55,4: CCL 138,326.

63. *Sermon* (s.) 57,5: CCL 138,337.

64. *Ib.*

that history is thus wholly exhausted in it. This is Leo’s meaning behind the *dies euangelii*, namely, the narrative is what really took place since the beginning of the Good News, and it will remain being announced up to the end of time, unto the very last human being on earth. It is the historical event that is in the Good News, and the Good News is news that has begun but which is not yet brought to completion. The reality of the historical event of our salvation makes its efficacy felt even in the present, in the liturgical action that takes place in the celebration of the sacraments. As long as there is man, that must exist also the salvation of man.

The sacraments (not simply the seven sacraments as defined by the Council of Trent) are moments during which, with the passing on of time, salvation is constantly being brought about. A sacrament is a rite which renders present a salvific reality and this can take place in a hundred-and-one ways, because, Leo argues, that which was visible in Christ has passed now into the sacraments themselves.⁶⁵ Namely, this is what is meant by grace: that which is invisible in Christ, becomes that which passes into the sacraments, but which, for Leo, is also that which was palpable: “*Quod erat conspicuum*”, because a sacrament acts precisely thanks to its visibility. The salvation which Christ brought about becomes a sacrament because in the visible and concrete action as a human being (but at the same time is also a sacred sign) salvation is also visibly brought about. Christ’s humanity renders visible God’s plan, and it is this plan of God, rendered visible, which then brings to man that invisible action of salvation.

After the Ascension, that visible moment of salvation is no longer visible in the humanity of Christ (which can now no longer be seen as he was removed far from the eyes of the Apostles); but He renders Himself present in the ritual sacred sign, in the sacrament; and thus in this same way He is present and brings about invisible salvation. Thus, after the Ascension into heaven, the essential moment of our salvation is not to be seen directly in the humanity of Christ, but in the rite which has the task of substituting Christ’s humanity.

The sacrament of salvation in Christ has thus reached, thanks to its saving action, human nature, saving every single human person through the sacraments. The Incarnation-Passion-Resurrection unique event of Christ took place for our salvation (*pro nobis*). It was God Himself who thought out this unique plan of saving man. But as soon as we speak of salvation, the reality of sin springs out with all the force

65. Cf *Sermon* (s.) 74,2: CCL 138A,457: “*Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transiuit...*”.

of its devastating effects. Leo, however, does not discuss the problem whether God would still have become man if man had not sinned at all. But, on the other hand, we would not have come to know of God's love if man had not sinned. In saving the primordial man, God, in Christ, saves all humanity because He saved the first man in order to save all of us; it is therefore in the person of the first man that God has saved all of us. As Christ, the First Man is holy, we all become holy too. From that very moment, the whole human race becomes sanctified.

By the term *sacrament*, Leo understands also all the liturgical celebrations, in that they are all sacred signs for salvation. The salvific action contained in the sacraments, that is the fruit of the work and person of Jesus Christ, becomes efficacious in each and every liturgical action. Among the essential elements contained within the term sacrament as being primarily a sacred sign, there is also, according to Leo, the component of time. A sacrament is an action in time. For Leo, there are two considerations to be made regarding this temporal dimension of the liturgical celebration of a sacrament, namely, the reading of the event found in the Sacred text, and faith. Thanks to the reading of the Sacred text, the reader himself evangelizes. One of the most efficacious properties of true faith is in that it is spiritually made present even there where the body cannot be visibly present. Faith finds no obstacle in the component of time, it is linked to the sacrament and like it overcomes the temporal boundary. It is thanks to the illumination of the eyes by faith: "*inluminatarum mentium vigor*", that we can behold the sacraments of the Passion of Christ. The fullness of intelligence is required because its absence would undermine the efficacy of the sacrament, once the sacrament is a sacred sign, and if one were not to grasp its meaning, the reality of the sacrament would be maimed as a result. The absence of the reality of an event does not take away any of the objective efficacy of the sacrament, because it is faith in it which renders it present to us and efficacious. Salvation began first thanks to the visible sacrament, that is, Christ's humanity, but faith was still required in order to believe in the reality contained by the sacrament.

The liturgical celebration, therefore, seems to nurture faith much better than the visible representation of the same. The profession of faith brings about the full participation and realization of the sacrament in the heart of the believer.⁶⁶ It is in the liturgical celebration that the realization of the sacrament occurs, and in which

66. Cf *Sermon (s.) 72.3: CCL 138, 443: "Si incunctanter itaque, dilectissimi, corde credimus quod ore profitemur, nos in Christo crucifixi, nos sumus mortui, nos sepulti, nos etiam cum ipso die tertio suscitati"*.

therefore is reaffirmed the efficacy of the example and the necessity of imitation. The celebration implies that beyond the external event, there lies an even more profound internal adhesion to the reality underneath, which assures the salvation obtained with every celebration of each and every sacrament. The sacrament coupled to the imitation of the example set by Christ, brings about the full participation and enactment of the same by the believer, and in the believer. As a matter of fact, those who are reborn of the Spirit will not be able, away from the sacrament, to bring about that which remains to be done on their part in this life, unless they truly embrace also the Cross of Christ. Only then can the true understanding of the sacrament of the great love of God, the “*sacramentum magna pietatis*” come out in all its brightness; only then can we comprehend the fulness of the salvific action in the imitation of the works contained in the account of the life of the Son of God, and thus merit the grace of God in us: “*Imitamini quod operatus est, diligite quod dilexit, et inuenietis in uobis Dei gratiam*”.⁶⁷

Conclusion.

It is needless to underline the fact that Leo’s rhetorical preparation, had made him too conscious of the finality behind every discourse, every Christian *Sermon*, namely that of persuasion. He knew very well how much a clear-cut exposition of the Catholic faith, coupled to those stylistic refinements of language required by the *proferre*, would eventually drive home far more easily those rather difficult elements of Christian dogma; but this required also the right disposition in his hearers who had to be led and to be convinced to adopt them in a right Christian way of life. It is thanks to his mastery of those post-classical rhetorical techniques and stylistic mechanisms of the refined *elocutio*, adopted in such a personal and unaffected method in the elaboration of the delivery of his *Sermons*, that he succeeded in making out of the most difficult concepts of Catholic theological tradition, a salutary medicine for the salvation of the hearers entrusted to his pastoral care. Leo’s hold of all those stylistic techniques of expression is not overdone; he is at his best in the use of alliteration (even the maximum possible, the quadruple) in order to arouse the full attention of his hearers.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Leo’s style, though not comparable to that of Augustine of Hippo or Jerome, is however a personal one. He is at the same time, however, very attentive and cautious in the use and mixture of styles, and only

67. *Ib.*, 5: CCL 138,446.

makes use of them when it is necessary and when they serve to drive home better the main purpose of his *Sermon*. In the opening phrases of one of his *Sermons* Leo confessed that the use of these oratorical techniques was not in order to appear puffed up, but in order that he might help his audience eventually to give glory and thanks to God.⁶⁸ Leo reminded his audience that the Gospel text, the *lectio euangelica*, which had just been read, was not enough for the more spiritual listeners; they needed something more besides having all the details of the event in front of their eyes, and that they accept it with all their hearts as the Word of God. But, in order that the full understanding of it might take place in them, they ought to desire the enlightenment (*eruditio*) of the Holy Spirit, and not to be content simply because they had grasped well and understood the sequence of the gospel events, the *ordo facti*. The success in their search for the reasons for God's works of salvation is measured by man's understanding of His love which then leads man to love God even more.⁶⁹

Scripture remains undoubtedly the main source for Leo's doctrine. It is not just a matter of coincidence that the majority of Leo's scriptural texts are directly connected to the mystery of Christ's Incarnation and to that other fundamental truth, His human nature. Leo very often gives his own personalized interpretative twist to a scriptural text. In his *Sermons* on the Passion there are scripture texts which he simply quotes without any comment because they serve to remind his hearers of a historical event simply as it is narrated in the Gospel. This is proof of the assumed familiarity of both preacher and audience with the data of Sacred Scripture. There are also texts from scripture which Leo uses as proof texts, the argument from Scripture; namely, scripture through scripture. And, finally, some scripture texts which he believed needed further elaboration. Leo's use of scriptural texts reveal a double preoccupation on the part of the orator: on the one hand that they serve the elaborate expression of a dogmatic truth, and, on the other, that pastoral attention required to drive home that practical aspect of his preaching exhorting his hearers towards a better Christian moral way of life. It is not his preaching activity which he puts at the service of Scripture, but the other way round, Leo's method is that of placing Scripture at the service of his preaching. There is an evident parallelism in

68. Cf *Sermon* (s.) 3,1: CCL 138,10: "*non ad nostram elationem sed ad Christi Domini gloriam consona uoce cantauimus*".

69. Cf B. STUDER, osb, "*Delectare et Prodesse. Zu einem Schlüsselwort der patristischen Exegese*"; in, *Dominus Salvator. Studien zur Christologie und Exegese der Kirchenväter*, Studia Anselmiana, v. 107, Roma 1972, 427.

the use of the theological scheme that characterizes the opening section of *Sermon 66*, namely: *fides recta – intelligentia – caritas*, with Augustine’s use of the same in *De catechizandis rudibus*.⁷⁰

These Lenten *Sermons* became privileged moments for Leo’s formulation of the *paschale sacramentum*. For him, Scripture too contained mystery. God’s interventions in the history of humanity too contained mystery. A kind of pious reading of Scripture would open up the reader to that faith in God’s actions in favour of men both those read about in the Old Testament as well as those in the New Testament. It was his delight to impart to his audience that type of catechetical-mystagogical sermons in which he succeeded marvellously to combine the joy of the account of the solemn liturgical event and the ethical implications for a good moral Christian way of life contained therein; this he coupled with the aura of the mystery of God’s immediate, actual, present and efficacious intervention in the celebration of event which brought about again man’s salvation here and now (*hic et nunc*). Through the sacrament God’s grace acts in the life of man and has on the latter an illuminating power too. The sacrament brings about man’s salvation who is also called to a participation in His wisdom thanks to an enlightened faith. Leo then applies to the account of the Passion narrative that sacramental and powerful salvific design of God, realized in His plan of man’s salvation, but which ought to be made known to him in order that he might live up to its demands in his daily Christian life. This allows Leo to unite the unchanging eternal plan of God with the precarious temporal situation of man. It is important for Leo that in order for man to be able to enjoy the benefits of this situation all along his life on earth, he must celebrate it.

Finally, Pope Saint Leo the Great, emphasizes the element of the saving power in the sacrament, which is proper to all the salvific events contained in the life of Christ celebrated by this liturgical feast, the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, Augustine of Hippo does not speak of the celebration of a sacrament in the celebration of the day on which Our Lord Jesus Christ was born, or on the

70. CCL 46,131: “...ita ut singularum rerum atque gestorum quae narramus causae rationesque reddantur, quibus ea referamus ad illum finem dilectionis, unde neque agentis aliquid neque loquentis oculus auertendus est”.

feast of the Epiphany.⁷¹ For Leo, in the same way that the *sacramentum salutis* throughout the earthly life of Jesus Christ, was linked to the different actions which he accomplished in view of our salvation, in the same manner, the *sacramentum salutis* which is accomplished in time, achieves that kind of transformation of the faithful in Christ in that it is tied to the liturgical celebration of the different salvific mysteries of the actions of the Lord throughout the year. On the one hand, the *sacramentum salutis* enables us to participate in the power and life of Christ; whereas, on the other hand, the liturgical mysteries celebrate successively the works of the Lord; the *sacramentum salutis* is recalled every year but in connection with the *curriculum* of the mysteries.⁷²

Select bibliography

- BATTIFOL, Pierre, "Léon 1er": in, *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*, 218-301.
- CASULA, Lucio, *Leone Magno. Il conflitto tra ortodossia ed eresia nel quinto secolo*, Tiellemmedia editore, Roma 2002.
- CHAVASSE, Antonius, *Sancti Leonis Magni. Romani Pontificis Tractatus Septem et Nonaginta, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina (CCL) 138/138A*, Brepols, Turnhout 1973.
- CHÉNÉ, J., *La Théologie de Saint Augustine. Grâce et Prédestination*, Éditions Xavier Mappus, Lyon 1961.
- COLAFRANCESCHI, Caterina, "Leone I, papa, detto Magno, dottore della Chiesa, santo" in, *Bibliotheca Sanctorum, vol. VII*, Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma, Citta' Nuova editrice 1966, col.1232-1280.
- CUNNINGHAM, Mary, B. ALLEN, Pauline (editors), *Preacher and Audience. Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, Brill, Leiden – Boston – Koln 1998.

71. *Letter (ep.) 55,2: CSEL 34,170: "non in sacramento celebrari"*. For a deeper discussion of the difference in the meaning of the term *sacramentum* in Pope St. Leo the Great's writings, and in those of St. Augustine of Hippo, the reader is referred to the excellent exposition of Card. M. PELLEGRINO, "L'influsso di S. Agostino su S. Leone Magno nei Sermoni sul Natale e sull'Epifania" in *Annali del Pontificio Istituto Superiore di Scienze e Lettere "Santa Chiara"*, 1961, 102-132.

72. Cf M.P. BERNARD de SOOS, "Le mystère liturgique d'après saint Léon le Grand", *Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen*, 34, Münster W., 1958, 76-77.

- DOLLE, R., “Écritures saintes et vie spirituelle en s. Léon”: in, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 4(1960) 158ff.
- DUNN, Geoffrey, D., “Suffering Humanity and Divine Impassibility: the Christology in the Lenten Homilies of Leo the Great” in *Augustinianum* 41/1(Junius 2001)257-271.
- ID, “Divine Impassibility and Christology in the Christmas Homilies of Leo the Great” in *Theological Studies* 62/1(March 2001)71-85.
- GRILLMEIER, Aloys, SJ, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Part Two, London 1966.
- HALLIWELL, William, J., *The Style of Pope St. Leo the Great*, Catholic University of America Press (= *Patristic Studies* vol. 59) Washington D.C., 1939.
- HUDON, G., “Léon le Grand”: in, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 9 (1976) 597-611.
- HUNTER, David, G., (ed.), *Preaching in the Patristic Age*, Paulist Press, New York – Mahwah 1989.
- HUNT, Bro. Edmund, CSC, (trans. by), St. Leo The Great. *Letters*, The Fathers of the Church, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 1957.
- LAURAS, A., “Études sur Saint Léon le Grand” in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 49(1961)481-499.
- KEEFE, O’, John, J., “Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology” in *Theological Studies* 58/1(March 1997) 39-60.
- LAUSBERG, Heinrich, *Elementi di retorica*, il Mulino, Bologna 1969.
- ID, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric. A Foundation for Literary Study*, Brill, Leiden – Boston – Köln 1998.
- LECLERCQ, J. osb., *Introduction*. Sources chrétiennes, 22, 1949, 7-66.
- ID, “Saint Léon le Grand et l’Écriture Sainte” in *Studia Patristica* 6 (= *Texte und Untersuchungen* – 81) Berlin 1962, 127-140.
- MARSILI, Salvatore, OSB, (a cura di ABIGNENTE, M.A.), *Mistero di Cristo e liturgia nello Spirito*, Città del Vaticano, Roma 1986.
- MEMOLI, Accursio Francesco, *Studi sulla prosa d’arte negli scrittori cristiani*, Società editrice Napoletana, Napoli 1979.
- MORTARA CARAVELLI, Bice, *Manuale di retorica*, Studi Bompiani, Milano 1988.
- MUELLER, M.M., *The Vocabulary of Pope St. Leo the Great*, Catholic University of America Press (= *Patristic Studies* vol. 67), Washington D.C., 1943.
- PELIKAN, Jaroslav, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago – London 1971.

- PELLEGRINO, card. Michele, "L'influsso di S. Agostino su S. Leone Magno nei Sermoni sul Natale e sull'Epifania": in, *Annali del Pontificio Istituto Superiore di Scienze e Lettere "Santa Chiara"* (1961) 102-132.
- PINELL, Jordi, OSB, *Ad celebrandum Paschale Sacramentum (=note ad usum alumnorum)*, Pontificio Istituto Liturgico S. Anselmo, Roma 1988.
- ID, *Paschale Sacramentum nei Sermoni di san Leone Magno*, Pontificio Istituto Liturgico S. Anselmo, Roma 1976.
- POLLASTRI, A. & COCCHINI, F., *Bibbia e storia nel cristianesimo antico*, Borla, Roma 1988.
- PONTET, Maurice, *L'Exegese de saint Augustin Predicateur*, Toulouse 1944.
- SCHWARTZ, E., *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum (ACO) 2/2-1*, Concilium universale Chalcedonense (6 vols.), Berlin-Leipzig 1927-1932.
- SOOS, de, dom Maria Bernard, OSB, *Le mystère liturgique d'après saint Léon le Grand*, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen, 34, Münster W., 1958.
- STUDER, Basil, OSB & di BERARDINO, Angelo OSA, (editors), *History of Theology. The Patristic Period*, volume 1, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minnesota, 1997.
- STUDER, B., "Delectare et Prodesse. Zu einem Schlüsselwort der patristischen Exegese": in, *Dominus Salvator*. Studien zur Christologie und Exegese der Kirchenväter, *Studia Anselmiana*, v. 107, Roma 1972, 431-461.
- ID, "Die Einflüsse der Exegese Augustins auf die Predigten Leos der Grossen": in, *Forma Futuri* (Miscellanea di studi in onore del Cardinal M. Pellegrino) Torino 1975, 917-930.
- ID, *Trinity and Incarnation. The Faith of the Early Church*, (edited by LOUTH Andrew), The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1993.