

## SUMMARY

**« A keresztény hívek Aranyszájú Szent János műveiben »**

**(Misiunea credincioșilor în operele Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur)**

**The Mission of Christian Believers in the Works of Saint John Chrysostom**

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**Keywords:**

Saint John Chrysostom, Church Fathers, Antioch, family, church, matrimony, ideal Christian city, culture, inculturation, layman, education, women's identity, pastoration, sermon, society, paganism, pilgrimage

**About the subject**

In our pluralist world the presence of Christian-ecumenical thinking is a general desire of the Church. This is what the popes and great theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as Christian thinkers recommend. This ecumenical attitude is exemplified by instances from the history of the Church, set before us as models to follow. Such a model-personality is John Chrysostom, a surprisingly modern character of church history. I wish to add as a curiosity that the Antiochian partners of the great theologian (Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia) were decisive, respected and recognized personalities of their age, but they were condemned after they died. However, exactly the opposite happened with Chrysostom: he was persecuted, unrightfully and unjustly condemned by synods, but everybody respected him after he died, and his teachings have been accepted ever since in the West and in the East alike. It is on this account that the personality of John Chrysostom is so attractive for me: he suffered for the truth.

The leaders of the western Church have repeatedly urged for the better, deeper understanding of the eastern Churches. Amongst these, Pope Leo XIII encouraged in several of his Apostolic Letters and encyclicals the benevolent relationship between the Latin Church and all those who bear the Christian name, but have a different faith, or keep no community with the heir of Peter. The pope emphasized that the Holy See appreciated and offered its direct help to the eastern Churches, and wished to preserve their peculiarities. The Church finds itself in several kinds of relationships with these communities.

Pope Benedict XV in his *motu proprio* dated 1 May 1917, *Dei Providentis*, formulated his statement determinedly in the favour of Christian unity: "The Church is not Greek, not Latin, nor Slavic, but one and universal foundation, the repository of truth and saintliness. It is a summarizing and general sacrament for the salvation of all peoples, all

languages, and all nations.” This thought was carried on unchanged in the *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* decree of the Second Vatican Council: “The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgy, ecclesiastical traditions, and the disciplinary order of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches. For these were what handed down to us, from the apostles through the Church Fathers, the greatly respected ancient tradition as part of the undivided inheritance revealed by the God of the universal Church.” It is highly recommended therefore for Catholics to most frequently draw on the spiritual riches of the Eastern fathers, which elevate the man as a whole to the contemplation of God’s affairs. Pope John Paul II urged the Church to this very same affectionate thoughtfulness by the example of his life and by his official statements. He wrote in his Apostolic Letter beginning *Euntes in mundum*: “Europe is Christian to its roots”. These two forms of the great traditions of the Church, the western and the eastern, these two forms of culture belong together just as organically as the two lungs of an organism. We may state that the two currents, the western and the eastern, have simultaneously become significant forms of the inculturation of faith, within which the one and undivided completeness – that Christ had bestowed upon the Church – has found its historical formulation. The cultures of the European nations – western and eastern alike –, in their music or literature, fine arts or architecture, as well as patterns of thinking, are penetrated by the same kind of life force, deriving from one and the same source. In his Apostolic Letter *Orientalis Lumen*, Pope John Paul II showed appreciation for the profound spiritual treasury of the Churches of the East, and urged all followers of the Christian faith to know them. For Eastern Catholics he even set it forth as a serious task. To follow this advice would mean our great enrichment by the knowledge of our traditions, as well as the development of our life of prayers.

Pope Benedict XVI also emphasizes that, although there is much more to be done, it is the time to propagate the “ecumenism of love” among the various Christian denominations. The common statement of Pope Benedict XVI and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, written in district Phanar of Istanbul on November 30, 2006 marks this commitment. This statement is entirely valid today as well, inasmuch as it emphasizes that the true dialogue of love must advocate and suggest the cultivation of inter-confessional and inter-personal relations.

One impulse in choosing my topic was therefore the fact that John Chrysostom is one of the Eastern Church Fathers whose teachings are still unanimously accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western Churches.

My research was also influenced by what I had experienced as a Catholic priest in Transylvania: that the spiritual legacy of John Chrysostom is common treasure in Transylvania. In this region, on the borderline of Western and Eastern Christianity, the Latin Church and the Orthodox Church have been, and still are both present. This is where Romanic, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque Christian culture met with the culture of Byzantium. It is my conviction that Transylvania's true spiritual importance must be grasped on the boundary of East and West: this is where all new or old currents of the development of humankind can be perceived, assimilated, turned into our own power. Chrysostom is surprisingly modern even while being ancient. He lived in an age when Eastern and Western Christianity, despite their differences in rites, still considered themselves as one. John Chrysostom is therefore our common asset.

I must also add as to the choice of my topic that the analysis of the homilies and works of John Chrysostom – although within the subject of priesthood – was part of my Bachelor's thesis defended at the Department of Dogmatics of the Pontifical Lateran University. My professors at that University were the firsts to draw my attention upon the rich spiritual legacy of John Chrysostom. It is natural therefore that the institutional framework of the Pontifical Lateran University has ensured ideal working conditions and plenty of materials – for which I am grateful – for the further investigation of my subject both in the field of research and scholarly dialogue.

Last but not least, another piece of influence in choosing my topic and keeping alive my interest in it was the fact that the age in which I examine the role of the laity is historically unique, and as such, may yield unique conclusions for present-day pastorship. Firstly, because today the Catholic Church – since the Second Vatican Council – has a different view on the laity, on those baptized. Secondly, because in our age the Church and the secular Christian live under essentially new circumstances. All those conditions which had defined the people of past ages, which had offered the framework of traditional societies and two thousand years of pastorship – natural residence communities, homogeneous society – fell apart. The urbanized man, deprived of the protection of the community, has to suffer several consequences of alienation and has to deal with the moral liberalism of the media and its values often radically contrasting Christianity and the traditional values of mankind.

## **Purpose, sources, methodology**

The purpose of my dissertation was to present the personality and ecumenical attitude of John Chrysostom, as well as his conception on the laity. Of all the Eastern Church Fathers it was he who dealt most with the role of the laity. I attempt to prove this methodologically by the analysis of his homilies and other writings. Thus I tried to examine the works of Chrysostom from a particular point of view. The original statements of the writer of the age make it possible for an attentive reader to gain a direct insight and thus formulate a clearer picture about the core of the problem discussed. The main source of my research is the series *Patrologia Graeca, Cursus Completus 1-116*, Paris 1857-1866, edited by J. P. Migne, but in order to facilitate reading, citation, as well as argumentation, I translated into Hungarian the texts pertaining to my research from the Migne-series, the Italian, German, and Romanian translations of the *Sources Chrétiennes*, and the series *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* (Church Fathers and Writers), while always referencing the data of the Greek texts in the footnotes. When (rarely) I took over the Hungarian translation of others, I also referenced it in the footnotes. The applied methodology compelled me to insert my own translations into the text besides the official translation of the Chrysostom-texts. In my thesis I borrowed the existent translations from the authors mentioned in the text, and in the case of the writings without a Hungarian translation I made my own.

The great number of bibliography entries in Romanian proves the respect and interest Chrysostom enjoys in the Orthodox Church. On the 1600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death almost all of his important works were published in Romania. These, as well as the many studies written on this occasion were of great assistance for me in elaborating my thesis. The research method applied in the preparation of the thesis may seem simple, but it was quite lengthy, as it needed a long process of source collection and, due to the lack of Hungarian translations, also a thorough work of translation.

My research deals exclusively with the issues I outlined for myself, I did not treat any other aspect of the subject. The method I applied – as previously mentioned – is primarily confined to the analysis of Chrysostom's homilies in which he encourages his followers and construes their responsibilities as Christians. The studies published in various languages about the issues of my interest are also part of my sources. Naturally, it was not an easy task to select and organize the material to only comprise the field of my choice, if one starts from the



generally accepted fact that all sermons or homilies of a priest are addressed to the laity, to the congregation. In this work of “selection” one may easily be a little subjective or biased.

The Church should find its pastoral ways these days in this completely new context: it needs new pastoral principles, or in other words a new kind or new methods of evangelization. Accordingly, the role and task of the laity in the Church and in the world is completely new as well. What is the mission of a layman – what can he do for the innovation of the Church, in the interest of evangelization? Although this question has a bibliography that would fill a library, it is not always the new approaches that are intriguing and compelling, but the well-known, trodden paths that may sometimes be repeated in church history should also be discovered. I should like to answer such questions as well in my dissertation, through the treatment of John Chrysostom’s homilies and works.

John Chrysostom is an outstanding saint of the 4<sup>th</sup> century who was priest in two metropolises of his age. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, just like today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Church had to deal with urbanization. It was this special situation then as well to which it had to apply the methods of evangelization, aiming for the general efficiency of the Christian value system. However, human nature and human needs have not changed much ever since. I hope that by my work I was able to highlight the unity of the life work of John Chrysostom in such a way that helps in reconciling the role of the laity according to the Second Vatican Council with the sacred tradition. In answer to the challenges of various ages, the Church always updated the eternal truths entrusted to it. The Second Vatican Council brought upon great changes also in the self-understanding of the Church. The Council set forth the fundamental unity of the Christians (clergy and laity) to modern society. Many have interpreted this as a new image of the Church. The Second Vatican Council advocated *communio-ecclesiology*. The Church’s concept as a community was exposed in a Decree issued after the synod treating the problem of the laity, entitled *Christifideles laici*, updating it with reference to the mission and vocation of the laypeople. “The identity and original dignity of the believers of Christ is only revealed in the mystery of the Church as community and mystery. Their vocation and mission within the Church and the world can only be defined by this dignity.” The importance of the community-concept of the Church is primarily not pragmatic, but dogmatic. The Council did not define the clergy by contrast to the laity. The whole Church is a pastoral nation, in which the clergy and the laity equally find the essence of their identity in their mission and vocation received by Christ, in the unity with Christ. This new concept of the Church, placed on Biblical and

Patristic grounds, has had several theological consequences ever since the Council, even to this day. A turning point in the Council's concept, closely connected to the image of the Church, is the reassessment of the relationship between the Church and the world. Before the Council the world was outside the sphere of the sacred. As opposed to this, the Council, by applying the theological term "the signs of time", defines the world as a space where God communicated himself to the Church and to mankind. With reference to the laity, this definition had the consequence that civil life, their activity in the world became for them the place of consecration. While the way of consecration leads through the world. The Second Vatican Council issued a special decree about the apostolic activity of the laity (*Apostolicam auctositatem*, November 18, 1965), which details those contained in the dogmatic constitution of the Church on this matter (*Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964). This document, in which, similarly to all the others, the expression "secular believers" was used instead of "laymen", presented the essence and characteristics of the apostolic activity of the laity. "The missions are different in the Church, but the mission is one" – pinpoints the document, and settles thus the theological roots of the pastoral work of the laity, as identical with that of the clergy. Their justification as apostles is offered by their unity with Christ, who sends them unmediatedly. Baptism engrafts them into his body, the Holy Spirit enforces them in Confirmation, and the Lord himself communicates to them by the Eucharist the love which is the basis of all apostolic work. This basic stance is enforced again in the passage on lay spirituality, which reads: "the efficiency of the apostolic work of the laity depends on how lively is their relationship to Christ". Although laypeople work in the world, their mission deriving from their unity in Christ refers at the same time both to the world and to the Church. They equally fulfil their mission in the Church and in the world, in the order of spiritual things and transient things. Therefore it is not the ecclesiological essence of the laity, but their field of apostolic work which differs from that of the clergy. They must conduct their apostolic work amongst transient things, this is what they must primarily renew. This train of thought seems revolutionary even today, and still the preliminaries and rationality of these thoughts are there almost word by word in the homilies of John Chrysostom. This fact is clearly represented in my dissertation by the analysis of John Chrysostom's homilies.

The source material of my subject is based on the works and homilies of John Chrysostom, as well as on writings discussing his life work. I *intended to formulate* the content of the thesis in such a way that, following a detailed biography and historical analysis, I

organized the thesis according to the life context and activities of the laity in the age of Chrysostom. I displayed the lay Christian identity structured by Chrysostomian principles in the spheres of social life, family, and Church.

### **Structure and subject matter**

**Chapter 1. (The life and work of John Chrysostom)** serves as an introduction and the foundation for the followings: in order to analyze Chrysostom's writings, it is necessary to know not only his personality and biography, but also the environment which might have had an influence over his development as a man and as a priest; furthermore, it is also necessary to perform a complex analysis of the political, social, church-historical context in which he worked and which he addressed. The reviewing of his works and their grouping and assessment according to previous research is also part of my investigations.

**Chapter 2. (The laity and social life in his works)** is closely connected to the previous one in this respect, as the presentation of the environment is necessary in order to create a historically authentic picture of the social life of the laity, and then observe the presence of this reality in his works.

It is almost impossible to write about John Chrysostom, the priest, without taking into account the *two communities* where he practiced his vocation as a priest. The social situation – in this case the spiritual, economic, and social background of the two metropolises – was decisive in all regards of Chrysostom's life conduct. Chrysostom's entire existence refers to that of his followers: first as a priest in Antioch, then as the Bishop of Constantinople, he was able to identify himself with both Church communities under his guidance. The first decisive factor was thus *the society of the city*. The city, according to his views, must first of all be a city built upon Christian principles. The earthly city must be the imitation of the heavenly city, this must be its target, or at least it should try to develop in that direction. In Chrysostom's city human relations and the solution of social problems must work according to the norms of the Christian faith, namely by the pattern of the norms of Early Christian communities. Therefore he cites *The Acts of the Apostles* in almost all his pertaining homilies. However, the image of the ideal city – just like previously with Plato, or later with Tommaso Campanella or Thomas More – is utopian with him as well. Making use of all his knowledge and erudition, he wants to *inculturate* the city living by pagan principles and breathing *pagan culture*, ennobling it with

Christian spirituality and a Christian system of values. This is his aspiration on the literary-stylistic level of his homilies as well. His *style* – besides correctness and clarity – is brilliant and flowing, with an inimitable and unique combination of the most suitable notions and examples. Although Chrysostom became famous and unique due to his homilies and not his exegesis, he is similar to Demosthenes in argumentation, to Cicero in his eloquence, and to Bossuet in his biblical and evangelical foundations. He is the last great metropolitan orator of the ancient world. He only read and wrote in Greek, he did not understand Syrian. Chrysostom was thus Greek, a Greek Christian, and a Greek city burgess as well. Like all other great orators, he could establish a close, impressive relationship with his audience. To his mind, the preacher is the messenger of Heaven.

Following the social life of the city, I deal with the other natural environment of the laity, the family. **Chapter 3 (Christian family education: the laity and the education of children in Chrysostom's works)** examines the role of the parents in their children's education according to Chrysostom. While recognizing, though with reservations, the human value of *pagan schooling*, he marks its boundaries, and warns about its dangers. With respect to Hellenist schooling, family-centred morality, and moral education, he *recommends deculturation*. In John's programme education starts in the family, in early childhood, thus the family is the place and cradle of education. That is, the first and most important factor in the educational process. The person's moral and religious education is the right and duty of the family. The young man brought up this way enriches his religious knowledge on the liturgical meetings in the Church, accompanied by his father. The Church is dependent on the family, and the family on the Church. Thus they mutually complete each other in this process. The layman's mission, received by the Church, is to *turn his family into a small Church, a cell of the great Church*, into a family-Church. He considers that the real remedy of the dangers is the moral education of children in the family. The family is the place where the children's integral education happens. Chrysostom divides children's education into several stages, and conceives of it as *the task of parents*, determined by the priority of the instruction to a moral life, and the correct educational environment. Since the education of children happens in a pagan, Jewish, and Christian environment, Chrysostom's programme also goes through changes, when he recommends better and more precise analyses and prescriptions after dividing first the environment, then education into stages. His thinking also developed from the point of view of

the necessity of education, when, following a reductive, monastic-type educational pattern, he recommends the Greek *paideia*, of course with a pure, Christian content.

**Chapter 4 (The process of education: dimensions and stages in his works)** examines the pedagogical views of John Chrysostom in an age-group division.

For Chrysostom the uniqueness of the Church justifies the expectation that every member of the Church should be connected to the Church just like to their own bodies. However, the thesis of the unity of the Church cannot be reconciled with the enmities among the members. For there is a blood-relation between Christ, the Head, and the Church, *his body*: Christ did not take his body from Heaven, but he took on the body of the Church. “I have become blood and flesh for you, now I return to you my blood and flesh to become thus your blood”. Christ, the Word incarnate, descended from Heaven to assimilate the Church. The core of the Christian community is the Christian family itself. The form outlined by Chrysostom, the small Church in which the Christian spouses may follow the mystery of Christ and the Church, as a paradigm from which the ideal of Christian marriage must spring.

**Chapter 5 (The role of the laity in family life)** examines Chrysostom’s concept of marriage not only from the point of view of education, but in general. I discuss *the Christian marriage* from the point of view of *its connections with Judaism and paganism*. For Chrysostom the family is a pre-eminent place – right after the Church – for reading the Scriptures. The role of the father is decisive: if in Judaism the father is the representative of the synagogue, in a Christian family he is the “prolonging” of the priest, the bishop, as well as the teaching mission of the Church. The Christian family was strongly influenced by pagan customs both in Antioch and in Constantinople. It is a fact that the pagan customs connected to marriage were harsh indeed: the betrothed, whether girl or boy, had to accept their father’s choice about their future spouse; this custom was already in use in the time of Pericles, the pioneer of the Athenian democracy. For wealthy families marriage was a good business opportunity. The wedding habits, from the nuptial ceremony to the feast, the immoral dances and songs of the *mimus*, the cries of the attendants are like preludes for the later dissensions, the love of luxury, abortions, which desecrated the marriage. It is in contrast to these customs that Chrysostom formulated his particular project on Christian marriage and the Christian family. From the singularity of the purpose of marriage – this was initially the *remedium concupiscentiae* for him as well – he arrived, also due to his background as a priest, to the twofold purpose: temperance and procreation. Approaching from the side of temperance, following the ideas of Saint Paul,

Chrysostom got to a more personal level, which meant for him perfect love and the purity of marriage. The unity of the spouses brings to life the unity and unbreakability of the sacrament of marriage, as the sign of the mystical union between Christ and the Church.

In **Chapter 6 (Family life)** the family comes to the fore as a small Church and the place of prayer. Chrysostom takes over the traditional view about married life, according to which the woman is subject to the man on all levels, although in a differentiated way, which is constructed according to the thought-pattern offered by Eph. 5:23 and Eph. 5:28. In his particular train of thought the various types of relationships characteristic to family life are also built upon this thought-pattern. From the merely physical contemplation of the sacrament of marriage he arrives to the ideal of Paul's "great secret": thus the purpose of marriage is not only procreation, but also the mutual completion of the two parties. The transition from the Church to the "small Church", the family" is compulsory. The problems occurring during this process are very complex, as are also the solutions offered by John Chrysostom. It is natural that in his attempt to find solutions he was influenced by his education, as well as the tension of the difficulties deriving from it. His erudition reclines on three cultural pillars: the Jewish, Greek, and Christian habitual systems. To master the Israelite tradition means for him an education within the family, common prayer in the family, the familiarity with, and reading of, the Bible, the forcefulness of the relationship between the father and the son. The Greek dimension, which, after the setback of monastic influences, continued with the classical form of the *paideia*, was due to Chrysostom's Antiochian learning. The Christian dimension, which Chrysostom wanted to bring in as an inner structuring principle of the families, was less successful in reality.

Within the Christian family, Chrysostom paid special attention to *women*, who, as *betrothed, wives, mothers, and nuns*, were the incarnation of the true feminine ideal. The Christian woman is pious, self-sacrificing, devoted, the embodiment of kindness, love, and beauty. It is also a fact that of all the Church fathers of the age, John Chrysostom's ideas about women are the most tender and positive. However, he says nothing else about their social role, in this he remains a product of his age. In Constantinople, especially during Chrysostom's second exile, there was a woman of important and significant role, a deaconess called Olimpiades, who, with extraordinary ability and wisdom maintains the relationship between the exiled bishop and his followers. Olimpiades also stands as evidence for Chrysostom's respectful treatment of women.

**Chapter 7 (The identity of the laity in the Church)** approaches the wider role of the laity. In the *Christian community*, which Chrysostom readily calls *family*, everybody has the same dignity due to baptism. He invites the lay believers to actively take part in community life: to collaborate with the clergy and the bishop by the power of baptism, which makes them apt for partaking in the *threefold munus of Christ*: the priestly, the kingly, and the prophetic function. In his view the believers' practice of general priesthood appears in the liturgy by completing the bishop's and the clergy's prayers. The "diaconia of love" for the poor is also a very important task, since it is Christ himself whom the believers serve when helping the poor. The help and support of the poor is the altar on which lay believers may present their sacrifice (alms) to Christ, because we always "*help*" Christ if we help the poor. The laity must also take part in the pastoral work of the bishop and the clergy, by the power of their general priestly function, since they are more suitable for constant communication in the city than the priests and the bishop.

The (private) education or instruction of others is the prophetic function of lay believers, and it must be characterized by a permanent communication with the clerical hierarchy. They must be like a bridge by which they must pass the teaching of the priests and the bishop on to everybody: Christians, but also heretics and pagans. The condition is a life of confession, always emphasized by Chrysostom.

The author describes the practice of the royal function within the religious community as the common enterprise of the clergy and the laity on the level of leadership and governing. Thus the magistrate may receive advice and assistance from his inferior (a layman). According to Chrysostom this function can be exercised in deciding the adequacy of the candidates for priesthood, in the just criticism of ecclesiastical issues, as well as in the collaboration with the bishop about matters of discipline.

The local Church and the family are always open for the external mission, with the aim of Christianizing the city and its customs. However, to build a Christian city needs an inner construction first: to demolish an old principle that the citizens do not procreate for themselves but for the glory of the city. Chrysostom therefore repeatedly stresses: everybody is the master of his own body, and it is not the city that has command of their body. Chrysostom here too uses the argument of *oikonomia*: this is the norm to be followed by a family. *The Christian family and Christian marriage is the basis of the new society*. Chrysostom praises the Christian family in contrast to the city built upon the old social principles: therefore *everything*

*that threatens the Christian family must be excluded* from the city of Antioch, even if it is connected to the traditions of the city. The Christian from Antioch should not tolerate the loud pagan feasts, horse races, or theatres and the agora. Chrysostom wanted to dispose of all these as bad pagan habits. Of course, to enjoy nice things was not only entertainment for the city people, but a community rite, the feast of the joy of life. Recognizing and acknowledging this fact, Chrysostom recommended new opportunities for feasting. Unfortunately all these could not be accomplished, since Chrysostom was already a bishop in the capital of the world as it was known then, and not in the provincial Antioch. *A way to prolong the evangelization of the city recommended and supported by Chrysostom were the processions in the neighbourhood of the city, organized for the veneration of saints and martyrs.* The origins of these processions can be found both in pagan and in Hebrew tradition. In Chrysostom's pastoral thinking the processions to the martyria and the processional veneration of relics could replace immoral theatrical performances, such veneration of saints and martyrs may call upon the imitation of city dwellers, and, last but not least, this is a serious form of evangelization.

However, this characterization may seem too superficial and meaningless. Because of his personal evangelic ideals and his Christian virtues, his personality needs a deeper scrutiny. The *hierarchy of virtues* for Chrysostom *can be deduced from their connection with the common good.* The authentic virtue is related to Christ's activity, which we will imitate provided we do everything in the interest of the common good, and do not only seek our own welfare. Actually, there is one single commandment which comprises the requirement of the love for God and one's neighbour. Nothing explains this better, and he who believes in Christ, learns nothing else than paying attention to one's neighbour and caring for their salvation. Virginity and fasting are useful and important in themselves, but that what serves the need of one's neighbour in all circumstances is more praiseworthy. The measure of the greatness of virginity is fraternal love and the compassion (*compassio*) felt for others. There is no Christian love where there is no care for the needy. One can ascend to heaven without virginity, but nobody can go there, even if being a virgin, if lacking compassion and charity. The box for alms must stand there by the bedside in the inner room of every family. *Most important virtues are love, truth, and the alms* – even more important than virginity. Christian families must always be open for the poor. The beautiful songs of the *kontakia* in the Byzantine Church still preserve the virtue of compassion formulated by Chrysostom.



He however, who was *the advocate of none other than the poor*, had to give up his utopian dream that the rich would share their goods with the poor; he became the preacher of the duty of charity, stating that for the rich almsgiving was a necessary means for salvation: “I say not these for the sake of the poor, but for your salvation, oh, you rich: because all shall be damned who here on earth did not feed Christ in the poor.” It is particularly noteworthy that John, similarly to Jesus, did not leave the poor to their fate, but linked their subsistence to the rich, claiming that the rich could not live or be saved without the poor. God left the poor and poverty to the benefit of the rich, since the alms are the instrument of God’s mercy in the hands of the rich. For John Chrysostom the man begging at the Church entrance in need of alms is the greatest treasure of the Church. The poor also raises the complexity of the Church, he is a living sermon on almsgiving, since by his mere presence he permanently signals for the believers that wealth is transitory, can easily be lost, and is of no avail on this earth.

In **Chapter 8 (Women’s identity in the Church)** we treat women separately as a group of the laity, as well as their service possibilities. Following the clarification of the various suppositions regarding the service of deaconesses, we discuss the parts in Chrysostom’s works directly referring to the service of women. Chrysostom’s image of women is definitely positive. In his view the woman is not lower ranked than the man in her abilities for apostolic service. As apparent in his sermons, he even counts on women in this service. This is why we treat his collaboration with Olimpiades in more detail.

In **Chapter 9 (Popular piety and pilgrimages)** we speak about piety as a characteristic form of manifestation of lay movements and activities, since these occasions were important forums of self-representation.

John Chrysostom’s pastoral ideas and activity must be assessed *in the light of his eschatological spirituality*. The reshaping of society and the city is not a self-sufficient task for him, nor the changing of a simply morally good and nice habit. Chrysostom thinks in a completely different dimension: the life a Christian does not end in this world, we are the expectants of another world, in which everybody attains their own reward or punishment. But unfortunately the world does not hurry towards Christ’s promised land, but feels better on Satan’s path.

The ultimate cause of his activity, which he recommends for the laity as well, is *the glory of God*: this must be the purpose and unifying idea of all their activities, this doxological element must accompany their whole lives. Therefore human existence in Chrysostom’s words

is similar to the lyre, the aim of which is to allow the chords of the lyre's strings to harmoniously resound the praise of God, and beyond: It must become itself a perfect appraisal of God. This doxological vocation urges the believer to break away from all earthly things, and yearn for heavenly things. This must happen as it happens when playing the lute. Similarly to the lute, we must pay attention and be mindful that the strings of our existence are tight and well tuned, and are always animated and enforced by the experience of faith, so that Christ, the lutist, may find the pleasing, harmonious divine melody (the life of the Christian), which is one, true, and unrepeatable. Christ expects the Christian man to be, like a lute, disposed to it, well tuned, and always ready. 1

Chrysostom recommends Paul the Apostle as an ideal: "May Christ speak from our exemplary lives. [...] Therefore has he created such a strong structure (existence) for us, and he wants not that it remained unused, but he wants it to be permanently ready. And if you say that this is so, then why don't you keep the loose strings tuned and ready, why do you let the strings fall out of tune, and become soft with your languidity, and the whole lute become unusable, [...], but if Christ finds it ready and tuned, he will play it for the benefit of our souls".

Chrysostom places this game of love between Christ and all other people into an even deeper context, which draws the entire heaven into this harmonious unity: he calls into dance the angels, archangels, the cherubim, even the Holy Spirit itself. At this point the image of the lyre is insufficient as an analogy. Because now we shall carry within ourselves, or what is more, we shall be the abode of, the Lord of the Sun and the Moon, the Lord of the angels, and we become identical with the skies ourselves. In addition, the personal relationship of man and God opens up for an ecclesiastical perspective, this is another mode of God's presence among us. His presence follows the pattern of loving cohabitation: *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20). The *doxological* perspective inspired Chrysostom's whole life, and it definitely marked the ultimate aim of his spirituality. Everything else is liminal and transitory, and is meant to be exceeded. Chrysostom's last words, "Glory to God for everything", as in a *verbum abbreviatum*, comprised every word he ever thought or uttered during his life, and referred back in a way to his life in Antioch: "I know no other life than you and your salvation". His whole life, beyond anything else, was *taking pains for the salvation of others*, which is for him the *greatest doxology* proffered for God. This is the most sublime and ultimate message that the pious and

holy priest transmitted as inheritance to the laity of the two cities which he ruled, but also to us, his present-day listeners and readers.

These are the main points of view I wished to present in my thesis, permanently allowing, of course, that the great pastor, John Chrysostom himself, have his voice heard through his homilies and other works. The lengthy and long-lasting encounter with his works made sweet the approach to the great Antiochian Church Father's world of ideas and ideals. I hope the admiration and love that I feel for his works and personality does not interfere with the objectivity of the subject discussed, but on the contrary, elevates it to the level of this experience, not excluding at the same time the fact that in most cases, as historian H.-I. Marrou – quoted by J. K. Galbraith – states: “history is always inseparable from the historian.”

John Chrysostom's basic attitude, which characterized him as a priest in Antioch and later a bishop, and for which he readily undertook any sacrifice, suffering, and persecution, was his unconditioned devotion for the truth and his followers. He was convinced that the Church was Christ's Church, and that Christ is always present in his Church. It was by the faith of this permanent divine presence that he could *formulate in such a beautiful and unique* manner his wonderful lines on Christ's presence in the Church: “the Church triumphs invincibly; it overcomes the scheming of deceitfulness; it brightly repels the attacks of shame; if it is wounded, his wounds will not inflame; if the rivers flood, it will not be flooded, if it embarks on a ship, it will not be shipwrecked; if it goes to war, it will not be defeated.” It was this conviction that guided the words and actions of Chrysostom, he never had faith in his own strength, he was physically weak, but spiritually strong, and always reclined on God's mercy; it was also this conviction which made him accept his exile, and what is more, even before his death he prayed to the Glorious God for all this – “May glory be to God for everything”.