

The Angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her” (Mt 1:20).

In the year 430, the Bishop of Ravenna in Italy passed away. Locally, a bishop was chosen as successor and the local clergy sent the neighboring Bishop of Imola to have the pope bless the decision. When Bishop Cornelius travelled to Rome to obtain papal approval, he brought a young deacon whom he had mentored in the ways of humility and self-denial. Deacon Peter lived a very simple life spending much of his waking hours in prayer and monastic solitude.

Similar to the dream of Joseph, Pope Sixtus III “experienced a vision from God on the night before the meeting, commanding him to overrule Ravenna’s choice of a new archbishop.”<sup>i</sup> Much to everyone’s surprise, Pope Sixtus III chose Peter the deacon as the new Bishop of Ravenna. The pope’s unusual decision proved to be a truly inspired one.

Bishop Peter was a gifted preacher. His nickname, Chrysologus, translates to “golden speech” in Greek. As a bishop for some 20 years, Peter preached on the traditional teachings of the church including:

- The Blessed Mother who remained a virgin throughout her entire life,
- Lent and the value of self-denial to help us grow in virtue,
- The Eucharist and the real presence of Christ in the Precious Body and Blood of our risen Savior,
- Apostolic succession and the primacy of Saint Peter as Pope.

Pastorally, he also preached against the Monophysite heresy which falsely taught Jesus “did not possess a distinct human nature in union with his eternal divine nature.”<sup>ii</sup> In addition to preaching for the people of his diocese he tried to deal directly with the promoter of the Monophysite heresy. “Near the end of his life [Peter] addressed a significant letter to Eutyches, stressing the Pope’s authority in the controversy.

Saint Peter Chrysologus died in the year 450. Through the centuries 176 of his homilies have survived. “They are ... full of moral applications, sound in doctrine, and historically significant in that they reveal Christian life in fifth-century Ravenna.”<sup>iii</sup> In 1729, Pope Benedict XIII declared him a Doctor of the Church. Today we know Saint Peter Chrysologus as the “Doctor of Homilies.”

The Office of Readings for today contains a brief homily of Bishop Peter Chrysologus on Christ’s Incarnation. “The hand that assumed clay to make our flesh deigned to assume a body for our salvation. That the Creator is in his creature and God is in the flesh brings dignity to man without dishonor to him who made him. Why then, man, are you so worthless in your own eyes and yet so precious to God? Why render yourself such dishonor when you are honored by him? Why do you ask how you were created and do not seek to know why you were made? Was not this entire visible universe made for your dwelling?”<sup>iv</sup>

The humble Bishop Peter could easily identify with Saint Paul. “To me, the very least of all the holy ones, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for all what is the plan of the mystery hidden from ages past in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the Church to the principalities and authorities in the heavens” (Eph 3:8-10).

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<sup>i</sup> [Catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-peter-chrysologus-546](http://Catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-peter-chrysologus-546)

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> [franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-peter-chrysologus](http://franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-peter-chrysologus)

<sup>iv</sup> [universalis.com/20210730/readings.1.htm](http://universalis.com/20210730/readings.1.htm)