Eldad Voremberg

THE SAINTS IN THE HOMILIES OF PHILAGATHOS OF CERAMI

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University

Vienna

May 2025

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Eldad Voremberg

(Israel)

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Chair, Examination Committee

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I, the undersigned, Eldad Voremberg, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the rhetorical and theological role of saints in the homilies of Philagathos of Cerami, a twelfth-century Italo-Greek preacher active in Norman southern Italy. By examining a selection of homilies containing hagiographic material, the study investigates how Philagathos employed saints not merely as decorative or commemorative figures but as integral agents in the construction of spiritual, moral, and exegetical messages. Central to this inquiry is the question of how hagiographical narratives are interwoven with liturgical readings and thematic concerns, and how these elements collectively inform the preacher's pedagogical goals.

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Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to explore the role of saints and hagiographical narratives within the rhetorical framework of selected homilies by Philagathos of Cerami, a twelfth-century Italo-Greek preacher from southern Italy. The present study focuses on how Philagathos integrated the depiction of saints into the structure and argumentation of his homilies. Several key questions guide this inquiry, namely, how did Philagathos usee saints as rhetorical devices to weave hagiographical elements into the core argument of his homilies? In what ways did he connect the saints and their associated stories to the liturgical dimensions of his homilies? Additionally, in the absence of a direct liturgical framework, how does Philagathos link the hagiographical content to the broader thematic concerns of his homilies? This investigation seeks to uncover the underlying dynamics that inform Philagathos's use of saints, examining the theological principles that shape his homiletic compositions. To address these questions, I propose a new analytical methodology, detailed in Chapter 1, which assesses the extent to which hagiographical elements are integrated into the liturgical or thematic framework of his homilies. By doing so, this study aims to shed light on the nuanced rhetorical strategies employed by Philagathos and the theological significance of his references to saints in shaping his messages.

The significance of this analysis lies in its potential to expand our understanding of the dissemination of the cult of saints within the Italo-Greek community, moving beyond the traditional focus on the textual lives of saints as constructions of identity and power. By examining the homilies of Philagathos, I aim to uncover how the cult of saints was conveyed not only as a theological and devotional concept but also as a lived experience and cultural practice among the diverse audiences of the time.[1] Thanks to the colophons found in the South-

1 On the topic of the construction of the Italo-Greek identity, see the articles by Eleni Tounta, "The Italo-Greek Courtiers and their Saint: Constructing the Italo-Greek Elite's Collective Identity in the Twelfth-Century

Italian manuscript tradition of individual items in the homiletic corpus attributed to Philagathos, it is possible to infer that Philagathos addressed, on different occasions, a broad spectrum of listeners, including laypeople, nobility, kings, monks, and clergy. This diversity of audience allows me to explore the multifaceted role of saints in shaping the communal and individual aspirations of the Italo-Greek population. By analyzing the messages and objectives embedded in his homilies, I hope to offer new insights into the collective self-perceptions, spiritual aspirations, and social dynamics of the Italo-Greek community during the Middle Ages, as much as one can from Philagathos' collection of homilies.

The homilies within the corpus under study here, particularly those containing hagiographical elements, underscore the supremacy of a virtuous Christian life, the possibility of spiritually imitating the saints, and the profound realities of the Christian afterlife. Philagathos, in his homiletic compositions, stressed the importance of delivering eloquent and compelling speeches that inspire moral and spiritual transformation. His use of vivid descriptions and rich analogies aimed to draw listeners toward a deeper understanding of their faith, compelling them to aspire toward the virtues embodied by the saints. Through his narrative artistry, Philagathos vividly brought biblical stories to life, elevating them with such grandeur that his audience could almost envision the soul's dramatic "jailbreak" out of the body as it ascends toward the heavens, or the arduous yet ultimately rewarding climb up the steep mountain of virtues to attain the divine. This rhetorical approach was not merely about intellectual clarification, but also about stirring the emotions of his listeners, transforming their passions into the service of virtue. By doing so, Philagathos sought to guide his congregation in their spiritual journey, encouraging them to live lives of greater holiness and devotion. This

Norman Kingdom of Sicily," *Mediterranean Studies* 28 (2020), 88-129; ead., "Conflicting Sanctities and the Construction of Collective Memories in Byzantine and Norman Italo-Greek Southern Calabria: Elias the Younger and Elias Speleotes," *Analecta Bollandiana* 135 (2017), 101-144; ead., "Saints, Rulers and Communities in Southern Italy: The *Vitae* of the Italo-Greek Saints (Tenth to Eleventh Centuries) and their Audiences, " *Journal of Medieval History* 42 (2016), 429-455.

rhetorical approach not only elucidated the hidden meanings of biblical teachings, such as Jesus's *Sermon on the Mount*, for example, but also aimed at "the redirection and transformation of emotion or passion into the service of virtue."[2]

Previous Scholarship

1. **Research on the Homilies**

The body of scholarly work on Philagathos of Cerami and his homilies provides a rich foundation for further study, particularly regarding his engagement with saints and hagiographical traditions. While the analysis proposed here represents an original approach, it builds upon significant contributions by previous scholars, who have illuminated various aspects of Philagathos's corpus and intellectual milieu.

The doctoral dissertation by Mircea Grațian Duluș represents the most thorough and comprehensive analysis of Philagathos's homilies to date. This very important work examines the homilies as a cohesive corpus, addressing critical questions of historiography, textual sources, and manuscript traditions. Duluș's research provides a nuanced understanding of Philagathos's intellectual influences, particularly his reliance on the Church and Desert Fathers of Late Antiquity. Through his work, M. Duluș underscores the central role of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition, led by figures such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, in shaping Philagathos's interpretative methods. Moreover, M. Duluș unhesitatingly identifies Philagathos as the author of an allegorical interpretation of Heliodorus's *Aethiopika*, an intriguing detail that situates Philagathos within the broader context of Byzantine literary and allegorical traditions. While he does not specifically analyze the role of saints in Philagathos's

[2] The importance of words and language in the Byzantine homiletic tradition was aptly described in Mircea Grațian Duluș, "*Ekphrasis* and emotional intensity in the *Homilies* of Philagathos of Cerami," in *Emotions through Time*, ed. by Douglas Cairns *et al.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 247-249, where the words quoted above come from.

homilies, his extensive bibliography and foundational insights into Philagathos's exegetical strategies proved indispensable to my inquiry.[3]

M. Duluș' work, in terms of interpretation, expands upon that of Giuseppe Rossi-Taibbi, who played a critical role in identifying Philagathos as the author of the homilies in the corpus earlier ascribed, based on a misunderstanding perpetuated by the Byzantine branch of the manuscript tradition, to a never existing 'Theophanes Kerameus,' and contextualizing their origins within the Italo-Greek tradition.[4] The role of saints in Philagathos's homilies has also received attention from scholars such as Cristian Gașpar and Mario Re, who have conducted focused studies on homilies dedicated to Saint Symeon the Stylite and Saint Pancras of Taormina, respectively. Their research highlights the interplay between hagiographical narratives and homiletic rhetoric, providing valuable methodological approaches for examining Philagathos's treatment of saints.[5]

These scholarly contributions developed several key methodological frameworks that inform my own analysis of Philagathos's treatment of saints: First, the comparative analysis by juxtaposing Philagathos's homilies with other hagiographical and exegetical works in order to identify intertextual influences and distinguish them from his own unique interpretative approaches. Second, closely examining the structure, themes, and rhetorical strategies within the homilies in order to uncover the theological objectives underlying Philagathos's use of the

3 Mircea Grațian Duluș, "Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami: An Investigation of the *Homilies* and of the Allegorical Exegesis of Heliodorus' *Aethiopika*." (PhD diss., Central European University, 2017).

4 Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi, *Sulla tradizione manoscritta dell'Omiliario di Filagato da Cerami* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1965).

5 Cristian Gașpar, "Praising the Stylite in Southern Italy: Philagathos of Cerami on St Symeon the Stylite [BHG 822]," *Annuario* 4 (2002), 93-109; Mario Re, "Le omelie liturgiche con sezione agiografica di Filagato da Cerami," in *Byzantino-Sicula VII: Ritrovare Bisanzio: Atti delle Giornate di Studio sulla civiltà bizantina in Italia meridionale e nei Balcani dedicate alla memoria di André Guillou (Palermo, 26-28 Maggio 2016)* ed. by Mario Re, Cristina Rognoni and Francesa Paola Vuturo (Palermo: Isttituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 2019), 215-230, and id., "Esegesi scritturistica e agiografia nell'omelia 20 (edizione Rossi Taibbi) di Filagato da Cerami dedicate a s. Pancrazio di Taormina," *Néa Rhóme: Rivista di Ricerche Bizantinistiche,* 13 (2016), 151-170.

saints. By building on the foundational work of these scholars, I aim to extend the analysis of Philagathos's homilies to a broader investigation of the rhetorical and theological roles of saints within his corpus. Through a detailed examination of how hagiographical narratives are woven into the homilies' arguments, I seek to uncover new dimensions of Philagathos's engagement with the saints and their significance within the Italo-Greek tradition. The integration of insights from M. Duluș, Gașpar, and Re provides a robust framework for exploring these themes and situating Philagathos's homilies within the rich tapestry of medieval Mediterranean Christianity.

The expansion of Mircea Grațian Duluș's research into areas beyond Philagathos's hagiographical homilies opens critical new avenues for understanding both the intellectual breadth of Philagathos and the broader cultural and theological frameworks of his time. By delving into anti-Christian polemics, in this context, M. Duluș uncovered original citations from sources previously thought to be lost, including the work, *Monogenes* by fourth-century Makarios Magnes. This finding demonstrates Philagathos's erudition and his reliance on a wide array of sources, some of which were previously unrecognized in the study of his homiletic corpus.[6] The interplay between art and rhetoric in Philagathos's homilies demonstrates his skill in using aesthetic elements as a tool for theological instruction and spiritual edification. Through detailed descriptions of sacred art, architecture, and natural beauty, Philagathos created a multisensory experience for his audience, fostering a deeper emotional and spiritual connection to his messages.[7]

6 Mircea Grațian Duluș, "New Evidence on the Transmission of Late Antique Polemics through the Middle Ages: Philagathos of Cerami and the *Monogenes* of Makarios Magnes," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 100/2 (2024): 323-346; id., "The Citational Practice of Philagathos of Cerami: Apologetic and Rhetorical Appropriations from Makarios Magnes' *Monogenes*," *Parekbolai* 14 (2024): 217-256.

7 Mircea Grațian Duluș, "Philagathos of Cerami, Procopius of Gaza, and the Rhetoric of Appropriation," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 60/3, 472-497; id., "*Ekphrasis* and Emotional Intensity in the *Homilies* of Philagathos of Cerami," 247-279, as well as Duluș's many contributions to Foteini Spingou, ed., *Sources for Byzatine Art History: Volume 3: The Visual Culture of Later Byzantium (c.1081-c.1350)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

By recovering these forgotten aspects of Philagathos's corpus, M. Duluș not only expands the scholarly understanding of this Italo-Greek preacher but also underscores the importance of his work in bridging classical, Byzantine, and Christian cultural traditions. Such multiple influence and ideas, position Philagathos as a vital figure in the broader context of medieval Mediterranean Christianity, a theme that resonates across multiple areas of historical, theological, and literary inquiry.

The multifaceted interest of M. Duluș in Philagathos and his works reflects the broader academic interest in similar enterprises, such as Nunzio Bianchi's work on uncovering the existence of Emperor Julian's *Contra Galilaeo*, and Alciphron's letters,[8] underscoring the previously unsuspected access of Philagathos to lost sources and his adherence to Byzantine rhetorical models.[9] Other scholars emphasized his skills in *ekphrasis*, mainly focusing on his description of the Cappella Palatina in *Hom.* 27,[10] or further explored the use of ancient writers and classics within the homilies,[11] and Philagathos's use of rhythmical *clausulae* as well.[12]

Scholarship beyond the Philagathonian milieu has been highly productive in establishing an investigative framework for the study of homilies. In particular, the volume *Hymns, Homilies, and Hermeneutics in Byzantium* has proven to be an invaluable resource for the scholarly analysis of homiletic texts and their composers in Byzantium. This work has

8 Nunzio Bianchi, "Nuovi frammenti del *Contra Galilaeos* di Giuliano (dalle omelie di Filagato da Cerami)," *Bollettino dei Classici* s. III 27 (2006): 89-104; id., "Tempesta nello stretto ovvero Filagato da Cerami lettore di Alcifrone," *Bollettino dei Classici* 26 (2005): 91-97.

9 Duluș, "Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami," 194-195; Nunzio Bianchi, "Filagato da Cerami lettore del *De domo* ovvero Luciano in Italia meridionale," in *La tradizione dei testi greci in Italia meridionale. Filagato da Cerami philosophos e didaskalos. Copisti, lettori, eruditi in Puglia tra XII e XVI secolo*, ed. by Nunzio Bianchi and Claudio Schiano, (Bari: Edipuglia, 2011), 41-42.

10 Eugenio Amato, "Procopio di Gaza modello dell'Ekphrasis di Filagato da Cerami sulla Cappella Palatina di Palermo," *Byzantion* 82 (2012): 1-16.; Ruggero Longo, "Dallo spazio alla parola, ripensare la Cappella Palatina, rileggere Filagato da Cerami," in *From Words to Space. Textual Sources for Reconstructing and Understanding Medieval Sacred Spaces*, ed. by Elisabetta Scirocco and Sible de Blaauw (Rome: Campisano Editore, 2023), 131-167.

11 Aldo Corcella, "Riuso e reimpiego dell'antico in Filagato," in *La tradizione dei testi greci in Italia meridionale: Filagato da Cerami philosophos e didaskalos: copisti, lettori, eruditi in Puglia tra XII e XVI secolo*, ed. by Nunzio Bianchi and Claudio Schiano, (Bari: Edipuglia, 2011), 11-20; Cristina Torre, " Su alcune presunte riprese classiche in Filagato da Cerami," *ibid.*, 21-38.

12 Lidia Perria, "La clausula ritmica nella prosa di Filagato da Cerami," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32/3 (1982): 365-374.

significantly contributed to the refinement of my theoretical approach, particularly in understanding homilies as both historical and exegetical sources.[13]

1.2 From a Manuscript Corpus to a Recovered Identity

Our primary knowledge of Philagathos of Cerami derives from colophons preserved within the South Italian manuscript tradition that transmits his homilies. The extensive research conducted by Rossi-Taibbi on this manuscript corpus, comprising over two hundred manuscripts, highlights the widespread dissemination and enduring popularity of Philagathos's homilies. This evidence underscores their profound impact within the Byzantine world, particularly following the transmission of this corpus from South Italy to Constantinople in the 13th century.[14] Subsequently, the identity of its author was often erased and, in certain cases, forged in efforts to reconstruct or alter their attribution.[15]

Little else is definitively known about Philagathos of Cerami beyond his role as a preacher and even the precise nature of his position remains a subject of speculation. Was he a royal preacher, perhaps entrusted with addressing the Norman court? Could he have been a leading figure, a "preacher of preachers," whose influence extended across ecclesiastical and royal circles? Or was he merely a humble preacher whose remarkable fortune afforded him the opportunity to speak before Norman royalty?

Drawing on M. Duluș's analysis of the homilies, it can be reasonably inferred that Philagathos of Cerami lived during the zenith of the 12th century. He is believed to have been born in the town of Cerami, Sicily, and likely received his early education at the Church of St. Andrew there. Subsequently, he appears to have embraced monastic life by taking the tonsure at the Monastery of New Hodegetria in Rossano, Calabria. Chronologically identifiable

13 *Hymns, Homilies and Hermeneutics in Byzantium*, ed. by Sarah Gador-Whyte and Andrew Mellas (Leiden: Brill , 2020), especially the studies by Wendy Mayer, Fr. Damaskinos of Xenophontos, pp. 30-46; Doru Costache, pp. 67-85; and Sara Gabor-Whyte, pp. 89-106.

14 Duluș, "Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami," 10.

15 *Ibid.*, 31.

elements in his homilies place him within the reigns of King Roger II (1130-1154) and his son and co-king Wiliam I (1154-1166) and situate his work in the religious and cultural flourishing of Norman Sicily during this period.[16] One such work was Philagathos' allegorical interpretation of the *Aethiopika,* an ancient Greek novel written by Heliodorus of Emesa the late 4th century CE. Based on a comparison of the allegorical methods used in the homilies and the allegorical interpretation of the *Aethiopika,* M. Duluș has concluded that Philagathos of Cerami can also be identified with Philip the Philosopher, mentioned in the manuscript tradition as the composer of this allegorical interpretation.[17]

The homiletic corpus that can be ascribed to Philagathos comprises a total of 88 homilies, many of which remain unedited. A first printed edition, accompanied by a Latin translation, was published in 1644 by the Jesuit scholar Franciscus Scorsus.[18] A later edition, produced in 1860, was based on Scorsus's work with the addition of two manuscripts.[19] The most recent critical edition, undertaken by Giuseppe Rossi-Taibbi in 1965, was originally conceived as a three-part publication. However, due to Rossi-Taibbi's untimely death, only the first part was ever completed and published.[20] Out of the 88, only 35 homilies were edited by Rossi-Taibbi and out of those, only 12 contain hagiographical content and form the nucleus of the investigation. In addition, a small number of homilies were published as well by various authors.[21]

16 *Ibid.,* 37- 38.

17 Mircea Grațian Duluș, "Philip-Philagathos' Allegorical Interpretation of Heliodorus' Aethiopika: A Reassessment of its Neoplatonic Philosophical Attribution," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 114 (2021): 1038-1040.

18 Franciscus Scorsus, *Sapientissimi et eloquentissimi Theophanis Ceramei Archiepiscopi Tauromenitani homiliae in evangelia dominicalia et festa totius anni* (Paris, 1644; repr. in *Patrologia Graeca,* vol. 132: 136D–1078D [Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1864]).

19 G. M. Palamas, *Του σοφωτάτου και ρητορικωτάτου Θεοφάνους αρχιεπισκόπου Ταυρομενίου της Σικελίας, του επικλήν Κεραμέως ομιλίαι εις ευαγγέλια Κυριακά και εορτάς του όλου ενιαυτού : εκδοθείσαι μεν το πρώτον υπό Φραγκίσκου Σκόρσου του Σικελού, εν Παρισίοις, εν έτει σωτηρίω αχξδ'. Νύν δε το δεύτερον μετατυπωθείσαι μετά προλεγομένων, και ενός εν τέλει προστεθέντος ανεκδότου μέχρι του νύν λόγου Ιωάννου του Φουρνη περί της μεταστάσεως του πανσέπτου σώματος της Θεοτόκου, κελεύσει του Μακαριωτάτου Πατριάρχου των Ιεροσολύμων κυρίου κυρίου Κυρίλλου εις κοινήν των ορθοδόξων ωφέλειαν*,(Venice: Nikolaos Glykys, 1860).

20 Duluș, "Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami," 31, 454.

21 Cristina Torre, "*Inediti di Filagato* Kerameus dall' Ambros. C 100 sup. (*Omelie LVI e LVIII Rossi Taibbi*)," *Bizantinistica* 14 (2012): 105-151; Gaia Zaccagni, "La πάρεργος αφήγσις in Filagato da Cerami: una particolare tecnica narrativa," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 35, (1998), 47-65; eadem., "Filagato, hom.

2. Previous Research on south Italy.

The Italo-Greeks of southern Italy have received significant scholarly attention since the works of Graham A. Loud and his successors. The volume *Rethinking Norman Italy: Studies in Honour of Graham A. Loud* encapsulates many of the recent historiographical trends, tracing the evolution of research since the 19th century.[22] Earlier scholarship often sought to draw a deliberate parallel between the Norman conquests of England and southern Italy, framing the latter as "the other conquest" and, in doing so, marginalizing its distinct historical significance. However, scholars such as Evelyn Jamieson, whose research emerged in the early 20th century, began to challenge this perspective, raising questions that remain the subject of scholarly debate today.[23] The expansion of studies on Norman southern Italy allowed the field to emerge from the shadow of the Norman invasion of England and its associated debates on its bureaucratic structures. This shift facilitated research into a broader range of topics, including art and architecture, social history, political history, and the wider discussions surrounding the bureaucratic legacy of the Norman kingdom.[24]

Examining the history of research on Norman Italy, in my view, provides essential insight into the complexities of its historical landscape: a region characterized by diverse cultures, religions, languages, and legal traditions. Understanding the evolution of scholarship in this field allows for a more nuanced appreciation of the intricate dynamics that shaped

XLI. Edizione e traduzione," in *La tradizione dei testi greci in Italia meridionale: Filagato da Cerami philosophos e didaskalos – copisti, lettori, eruditi in Puglia tra XII e XVI secolo*, ed. Nunzio Bianchi, (Bari: Edipuglia, 2011), 149-163; Nunzio Bianchi, "Frammento omiletico inedito per la Vergine: Filagato da Cerami, hom. LXXXVI," *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* s. III, 6 (2009), 307-311; Stefano Caruso, "Le tre omelie inedite 'Per la Domenica delle Palmeř di Filagato da Cerami," *Epeteris Hetaireias Byzantinon Spoudon* 41 (1974): 109-132.

22 Joanna H. Drell and Paul Oldfield, eds., *Rethinking Norman Italy: Studies in Honour of G.A A. Loud* (Manchester University Press, 2021).

23 Hiroshi Takayama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Leiden: Brill Publishing 1993).

24 Joannah H. Drell, "Introduction", *Rethinking Norman Italy*, 1-5; David Abulafia, "Norman Italy and Sicily Through the Eyes of British Historians, 1912-76", *Rethinking Norman Italy*, 15-28.

Norman southern Italy.[25] This exploration will aid anyone interested in the region in grasping the complexities of the Italo-Greek community's lived experience, particularly that of our central figure, Philagathos of Cerami. By situating his life and works within the broader historical and cultural dynamics of Norman southern Italy, it becomes much easier to appreciate the intricacies of his intellectual and religious milieu.[26]

Philagathos of Cerami and the Italo-Greek Monastic Community

The Monastery of New Hodegetria in Rossano, where Philagathos became a monk, could be used as introductory endeavor to the history of southern Italian monasticism and its relation to Philagathos of Cerami. Founded by the Saint Bartholomew of Simeri in 1092, the monastery and its library can be defined as fundamental part of the "Italo-Greek Renaissance," a term used to describe the revival of Italo-Greek monastic and ecclesiastical culture under Norman rule. This designation is supported by the significant patronage extended by the Norman monarchy to Italo-Greek religious institutions and by the "dramatic increase in the number of surviving Greek manuscripts," reflecting a flourishing of Greek intellectual and religious activity in southern Italy,[27] especially in the twelfth century, when Philagathos lived.

25 On such matters see the following articles: on architecture and art, Lev A. Kapitaikin, "Sicily and the Staging of Multiculturalism," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. by Finbarr Barry Flood and Gulru Necipoglu, 2 vols (New Jeresy: John Wiley & Sons, 2017) 378-404; Hiroshi Takayama, *Sicily and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2019). The following articles discuss notary evidence from Calabria, showing the legacy of Byzantine bureaucracy : Annick Peters-Custot, "Les plateae calabraises d'époque normande. Une source pour l'histoire économique et sociale de la Calabre byzantine?," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* (2014)" 389-408; Christina Rognoni, "Pratique juridique grecque et économie dans la Calabre post-byzantine (XII^{e} -XIII^{e} siècle)," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 28 (2014): 409-430. On the worship of saints from the Byzantine period to the Norman era, see: Paul Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)and the work of G. A Loud in G. A Loud and Alex Metcalfe, eds., *The Society of Norman Italy* (London: Brill, 2002); G.A Loud, ed., *Roger II and the Creation of the Kingdom of Sicily* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) as well as id., *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest* (London: Longman, 2000).

26 For a good overview of the Italo-Greek community, see Annick Peters-Custot, *Les grecs de l'Italie méridionale post-byzantine, IX^{e}-XIV^{e} siècle: une acculturation en douceur* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2009).

27 James Morton, *Byzantine Religious Law in Medieval Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 43-44. See n.65 in Morton's book for conflicting opinions by historians.

The origins of the monastical and ecclesiastical communities of the Italo-Greeks were shaped by two major prolonged historical developments: the Byzantine-Lombard conflicts, which persisted from the sixth to the eighth centuries, and the Islamic conquest of Sicily, accompanied by continuous raids into southern Italy from the ninth century until the Norman victories of the eleventh century. These events contributed to the geographical distribution of the Italo-Greek community across three principal centers of influence, situated between its cultural and religious "origins" in the Orthodox Christian world of the Byzantine east, the Latin Christian sphere to the north, and the Islamic world of North Africa to the south.[28] The Greek monastic presence in southern Italy emerged from diverse origins, primarily linked to historical migrations. These included the resettlement of populations following the Justinianic reconquests and the influx of Orthodox Christians fleeing the Arab conquests of Sicily and the Levant between the seventh and ninth centuries and the reorganization of the Orthodox church outside under Emperor Leo III in the eight century.[29]

A defining feature of the Italo-Greek community was its monastic tradition, characterized by the use of Greek as its liturgical and communal language and adherence to Orthodox Greek religious practices and customs.[30] From its onset, monastical foundations were created as small lay, family funded monasteries, according to the rules of Saint Basil and Theodore the Studite. But as time progressed further into the eleventh century, many of those smaller monasteries were donated to much bigger, grander monasteries.[31]

Such congregations of monasteries were found in Calabria, home to significant monastic centers such as Reggio and Rossano, both of which played a crucial role in the preservation and transmission of Orthodox monastic traditions. To the north of Calabria, near

28 Annick Peters-Custot "Greek Communities in post-Byzantine Italy," in *Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World:* A Companion to Byzantine Italy, vol. 8, ed. by., Salvatore Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 126-133.

29 Peters-Custot, *Les grecs de l'Italie méridionale post-byzantine*, 1-8 and 32-48.

30 *Ibid*, 152-153.

31 *Ibid*, 200-201.

the Lombard frontier, lay the Mercurion, a region densely populated with Orthodox-Greek monasteries and frequently referenced in hagiographical literature as the setting for the lives of Orthodox saints. Further east, along the Tyrrhenian coast, Apulia emerged as another significant monastic center, encompassing major cities such as Bari, Taranto, and the region of Salento.[32]

The gradual Norman conquest of southern Italy significantly altered the power dynamics for the Italo-Greek community and its monastic institutions. Key cities such as Palermo, Messina, Reggio, and Rossano emerged as prominent religious centers of the southern peninsula. Although firmly established, the Italo-Greek monastic community remained geographically limited in scope. Unlike their Western counterparts, who adhered to a standardized monastic rule such as the Benedictine Rule and strict hierarchy, Italo-Greek monasteries continued not follow a rigid, uniform code of monastic conduct. Instead, most monasteries, particularly the larger ones, functioned independently, maintaining a degree of autonomy in both governance and daily practices. Many of these monastic institutions were largely self-sufficient, sustaining themselves through agricultural production and local resource management.[33] Although direct political ties between the Italo-Greek community and the Byzantine mainland eventually ceased, religious, legal, and cultural connections persisted, ensuring the continued transmission of Byzantine traditions in southern Italy.[34]

An example of such a monastery is that of the New Hodegetria in Rossano, founded by Bartholomew of Simeri with the help the count Roger I, part of a monastical revival

32 On Orthodox saints and self-expression in the Italo-Greek community see the aforementioned articles by Elenti Tounta, in n. 1 of this thesis. Overall, the geographical limitation of the Italo-Greek community did not result in intense hostilities with the other communities in southern Italy, mainly the Muslims of Sicily and the Lombards and Latins of central Italy. The opposite is true: between the tenth and twelve centuries, it is possible to discern cultural fluidity between the Latin and Italo-Greek communities, especially in religious and monastic environment: see Enrico Morini, "Greek Monasticism in Southern Italy: The Encounter between East and West," in *Monastic Tradition in Eastern Christianity and the Outside World: A Call for Dialogue.* ed., I. A. Murzaku (Paris: Peeters Publishers, 2013), 69-101.

33 Peters-Custot, *Les grecs de l'Italie méridionale post-byzantine, IX^e^-XIV^e^ siècle,* 100-119.

34 *Ibid.,* 140-143.

sponsored by the Normans. The monastery became the head of an uncertain number of smaller monasteries, as was the Monastery of the Savior in Messina, also founded by Bartholomew of Simeri with the support of king Roger II, which was put in charge of monasteries in Sicily and Calabria.[35]

At that monastery, New Hodegetria, Philagathos might have encountered vast knowledge of many kinds that might have originated from Constantinople, as it is written in the *Vita* of Saint Bartholomew of Simeri that the saint embarked on a trip to Constantinople where he met with the emperor and his wife, who then furnished the saint with lavish sacred books and icons to take back to his monastery.[36]

The monastical library in Rossano is considered as one of the most illustrious and magnificent in the Italo-Greek context. Pierre Batiffol in the late nineteenth century echoed sixteenth century revelations regarding the state of southern Italy as a whole with regards to the libraries of its Italo-Greek monasteries and expounded upon the vast contents of the library of New Hodegetria.[37]

The monastery's prestigious library, enriched by imperial gifts and sustained through Norman patronage, would have offered Philagathos access to a wealth of Greek textual traditions and writers, informing the depth and character of his homiletic writings. Thus, his work stands not only as a testament to his personal erudition but also as a reflection of the broader role of the Italo-Greek monastic communities as active receivers of Greek knowledge.

35 James Morton, "Latin Patrons, Greek Fathers: St. Bartholomew of Simeri and Byzantine Monastic Reform in Norman Italy, 11th-12th Centuries", *Allegorica* 29 (2013): 22-23.

36 Gaia Zaccagni, "Il *Bios* di san Bartholomeo da Simeri." Accessed May 18, 2025. https://www.oodegr.com/tradizione/tradizione_index/vitesanti/bartolomeosimeri.htm

37 Pierre Batiffol, *L'abbaye de Rossano : contribution à l'histoire de la Vaticane* (Paris: A. Picard, 1891).

Chapter 1: Establishing a Theoretical Framework for Exploring Philagathos's Homilies on the Saints

In the present chapter, I intend to explain the framework within which I intend to pursue the course proposed in the introduction, i.e., the analysis of the relationship between the hagiographic elements and the liturgical readings in Philagathos's homilies. My framework is guided by several key questions: How did Philagathos employ the lives and miracles of saints as rhetorical devices to integrate hagiographic content with the overarching themes of his homilies? Did he use the narratives about the saints merely as ornamental preambles, or did he invest them with deeper significance, aligning them with the broader thematic concerns of his discourse? For the establishment of the framework, I will use the works of Mario Re and one by Cristian Gașpar on homilies 1, 6 and 26 to establish a coherent typology of the homilies.

I have classified the homilies containing hagiographic material into three distinct, albeit flexible, categories based on the relationship between the homiletic parts that contain hagiographical detail and the liturgical readings under examination. The first type contains homilies with no discernible connection between the hagiographic and liturgic parts. In these homilies, the hagiographic and liturgical sections remain disconnected, with the reference to the saint being superficial and lacking substantive integration with the parts of the text inspired by the liturgical reading (if this is present). A second type includes the homilies where the relationship between the hagiographic content and the interpretation of liturgical material, although not absent, is not explicit. The mention of a saint serves as a pretext for an allegorical interpretation of the liturgical content, without establishing a direct connection between the two. A third type is that of homilies in which the hagiographic sections devoted to the saint are aligned with and complement the allegorical interpretation of the liturgical text. This approach reflects a coherent interpretative strategy, integrating both sections into a unified narrative that creates a singular purpose and flow within the homiletic discourse.

As previously mentioned in the introduction, only sixteen of the homilies of the Philagathean corpus are dedicated to feasts of saints. These are *Hom.* 1 on Saint Symeon the Stylite, *Hom.* 10 on Saint Demetrius, *Hom.* 15 on Saints Cosmas and Damian, *Hom.* 16 on the Archangel Michael, *Hom.* 17 on Philip the Apostle, *Hom.* 18 on Andrew the Apostle, *Hom.* 27 on the apostles Peter and Paul, *Hom.* 19 on Saint Barbara, *Hom.* 20 on Saint Nicholas of Bari, *Hom.* 21 on Saint Anna, *Hom.* 23 on Saint Stephen, *Hom.* 26 on Saint Onuphrius, *Hom.* 28 on Saint Procopius, *Hom.* 29 on Saint Pancratius. and *Hom.* 30 on Saint Panteleeimon.

Of these, only ten homilies have received significant scholarly attention in modern scholarship; In his first article,[38] Re classified and analyzed homilies based on the information they provide about the hagiographic subject matter, their exegetical treatment of the liturgical content, and the relationship between these two components. However, two homilies were excluded from Re's analysis: *Hom.* 20, dedicated to the feast of Saint Nicholas of Bari, and *Hom.* 34, dedicated to the feast of Saint Bartholomew of Simeri.

Regarding *Hom.* 20, Re justified its exclusion by the absence of substantive hagiographic content: "Altro del santo di Mira non si dice, se non invocarne l'intercessione poco prima della conclusione dell'omelia (§ 18). Manca, dunque, un contenuto propriamente agiografico."[39] As for *Hom.* 34, its exclusion is explained by its structural composition. Re observes that this homily is entirely dedicated to a discussion of the saint and a theme selected by Philagathos, without incorporating an exegetical section addressing the daily liturgical readings. Furthermore, the hagiographic content of the homily is not subjected to allegorical interpretation. Re also notes that, unlike other homilies with hagiographic elements, *Hom.* 34 focuses on a saint contemporary to Philagathos, most likely his spiritual mentor. Re's analysis

38 Re, "Le omelie liturgiche con sezione agiografica di Filagato da Cerami."
39 *Ibid,* 217.

focuses exclusively on homilies that integrate both hagiographic and liturgical content into a framework of allegorical interpretation.

The typological classification of *Hom.* 20 and 34 pose a notable challenge, as these homilies do not neatly align with the framework proposed by Re, primarily due to the absence of a distinct element necessary for his categorization. Nevertheless, I believe that a thorough analysis of these homilies will reveal a closer connection between the hagiographic and liturgical components in the case of *Hom.* 20, and between the hagiographic and thematic components in the case of Hom. 34.[40] To refine the overall typological classification of the homilies, I will build upon the existing discussions of Cristian Gaşpar for *Hom.* 1 and Mario Re for *Hom.* 26 and 29**.** By employing these previously studied homilies as exemplars for the clear division by my typology, I will establish a framework for examining homilies 20 and 34 in greater depth.

As defined above, homilies of Type 1 include those texts in which there is no discernible connection, either explicit or implicit, between the hagiographic and liturgical sections. The details provided by Philagathos about the saint bear no substantial relationship to the liturgical component, serving primarily to mark the occasion of the day's festivities.

A characteristic example of this type is *Hom.* 26, delivered on the feast of Saint Onuphrius (June 12), Mario Re observed that the homily transitions directly from an introductory panegyric about the saint to the liturgical reading, without establishing any

40 Further reason of interest lies in the fact that Saint Nicholas of Bari and Saint Bartholomew of Simeri represent two types of accepted sainthood: Saint Nicholas is the over-arching Byzantine saint, with his own allocated piece recorded inside various menologions or the synaxaria, venerated throughout the Byzantine east and the Lain west. Saint Bartholomew of Simeri represents a mere local saint, with hardly any evidence of the cult outside southern Italy or the monasteries he founded outside of it. Saint Bartholomew of Simeri in his my eyes both at the same time an important figure for Philagathos and southern Italian monasticism but also a minor figure, in contrast to the grand-Byzantine saints such as Nicholas. While it does not impact the direction of my research, nor does it say that it is not possible for Italo-Greek saints to be known outside of Italy (Such as again, Saint Bartholomew highly respected visit to Constantinople and meeting the Emperor and wife), such distinction might enriches our understanding of the Italo-Greek cult of saints. See furthermore: Peters-Custot, *Les grecs de l'Italie méridionale post-byzantine*, 150-152.

meaningful link between the two sections. Beyond this initial panegyric, the hagiographic content and references to the saint are entirely absent from the remainder of the homily.

Hom. 1 and 29 can be positioned at the opposite end of the typological spectrum, (Type 3 in my classification), i.e., texts where the allegorical interpretation operates in parallel across both the hagiographic section and the liturgical section. Unlike Type 1 homilies, which lack a discernible connection between their various components, these homilies exhibit a cohesive interplay between the two parts, reflecting a deliberate and unified interpretative strategy. Both *Hom.* 1 and *Hom.* 29 merit closer examination of their components and relation within other homilies, particularly when contrasted with *Hom.* 26. This deeper discussion will elucidate how the allegorical themes are woven consistently across the hagiographic and liturgical sections, further highlighting the distinctiveness of Type 3 homilies within the typological framework proposed here.

Homily 1: Symeon the Stylite and Numerology

In his article, which includes the full translation of *Hom.* 1, Cristian Gașpar examines the allegorical significance attributed to the height of Symeon the Stylite's pillar. Gașpar's analysis reveals that Philagathos deliberately focused on the allegorical interpretation of the pillar's height, employing numerology to align this interpretation with the allegorical framework of the liturgical section. According to Philagathos, the specific height of the stylite's column, measured in an increasing number of cubits, symbolizes the column of virtues that a good Christian must ascend. This numerological allegory serves to link the physical dimensions of the pillar to the spiritual ascent of moral excellence. The allegorical interpretation originates from a rhetorical question posed by Philagathos, adopting the perspective of those who might question the feasibility of imitating the saints. By addressing such doubts, Philagathos integrates the hagiographic narrative into a broader theological and moral discourse, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the homily's hagiographic and liturgical

components.However, the lives of the saints were written not only for the purpose of stirring admiration; nay, through our admiration we should rather be drawn to become their imitators! But someone will say: "Now, how is it possible to imitate him, when his ascetic feats go beyond human nature's limits?[41]

Philagathos then answers the question a few paragraphs later:

> Following the example of that great [saint], let us shun this vain and uselesstrifle of glory […] The saint was not lifted to the heights of his column before having plunged himself into the dry pit […]We shall also not be raised to the heights of virtue unless we [first] embrace humility […] let us embrace an even harsher way of life! Let us mount the column of virtue with small steps, first reaching to a height of six cubits; this obviously means that we should make the fundament of our further ascent those six commandments through which the just will inherit the heavenly kingdom.[42]

Thus, Philagathos equated the height of Symeon the Stylite's column to the number of the 6 commandments that his followers were called to observe, allegorizing the physical labor involved in constructing the column with the spiritual effort required by spiritual growth. By doing so, he connected the stylite's physical struggle to his audience's spiritual journey, encouraging them to perceive their own challenges as analogous to those of the saint. Through this interpretative strategy, he seamlessly integrated the hagiographic narrative with the allegorical exegesis of the liturgical text, reinforcing his message of spiritual striving and moral fortitude.

Philagathos further extended this numerological allegory between the height of the stylite's pillar and practiced Christian virtues in his call for imitation, using the same symbolic framework to emphasize the spiritual ascent required of his audience: And if we multiply our virtues like a mina or a talent, increasing them throughout effort, then the cycle of our virtues will be complete, the hexad of the commandments being multiplied by itself so that the six may

41 *Hom.* 1.11, trans. Gaşpar, "Praising the Stylite in Southern Italy," 105.
42 *Hom.* 1.16, trans. *ibid.*, 107.

become thirty-six. For there, I think, if the column of the great Symeon was raised to this height (as the story goes), it is because this number is a circle, and a triangle, and a square, and it signifies the perfection of his virtue.[43]

Such an allegorical practice, while effective in conveying spiritual lessons, poses a potential challenge for historians attempting to trace the hagiographic sources Philagathos used. As Gașpar pointed out, in his effort to create a coherent and idealized allegory, Philagathos may have deliberately omitted varying accounts of the column's height found in some of his sources. By doing so, he crafted a more uniform and symbolically consistent narrative, aligning the physical dimensions of the column with the moral ascent he wished to emphasize.[44]

The homily is meticulously structured into two primary sections. Paragraphs 1-9 focus on explaining the various methodologies used to calculate the date for the ecclesiastical new year. This section offers a detailed analysis of the Jewish and Roman origins of the calendar, followed by a discussion of the Christian rationale, particularly in paragraph 3. Furthermore, it examines the biblical events that inform the choice of the specific month designated as the beginning of the ecclesiastical new year. The second part of the homily presents a succinct account of the life of Saint Symeon the Stylite. This narrative is then subjected to an allegorical interpretation, drawing parallels to the audience's own spiritual struggles in their pursuit of a virtuous Christian life.

Although the homily lacks a separate section dedicated to interpreting the liturgical reading, it connects the occasion of the ecclesiastical New Year to the celebration of the saints. In paragraph 9, Philagathos writes: “and think also of how on this day, which is the beginning and the crowning of the year, we celebrate the common feast of many saints who help us to

43 *Hom.* 1.17, trans., *ibid.*, 107.
44 *Ibid.*, 98-99.

live in virtuously throughout the year!" In this way, the celebration of the saints becomes an integral part of the broader liturgical and temporal framework, reinforcing the homily's call to virtuous living.[45] But nonetheless, such an arrangement presents, in my opinion, a shallow connection between the hagiographical part and the thematic part, overshadowed by the greater connection with the numerological analysis.

In conclusion, Homily 1, despite lacking a dedicated liturgical reading section, relies heavily on the allegorical interpretation of the saint's life as the central message of the homily. As such, it fits among Type 3 homilies containing hagiographic content.

Homily 29: Pancratius and Onomastics

Hom. 29, dedicated to the feast of Saint Pancratius, includes a liturgical reading section, specifically John 10:9-16, as the first part of the homily, with the life of Saint Pancratius and its spiritual exegesis following in subsequent paragraphs. The structure of the homily places it firmly within the Type 3 parameters. Philagathos effectively intertwines the hagiographic and liturgical components into a cohesive exegetical framework, where the hagiographic content serves as a means to deepen the spiritual interpretation of the attached biblical reading. The ultimate goal of the homily is to create a program of spiritual imitation for his audience, rooted in an exegetical understanding of the biblical passage. In this way, the homily demonstrates the harmonious parallelism between the saint's life and the liturgical text, leading to a unified pedagogical message on virtuous Christian living.

Building on the conclusion of the homily and Re's analysis, the central theme of imitation of the saint by the audience emerges as both the ultimate goal and the primary inspiration driving the homily. This call for imitation is prominently emphasized: it functions as the connective bridge between the liturgical and hagiographic sections. In the liturgical part, Jesus is presented as the ultimate example of the "good shepherd," a model for Christian

45 *Ibid.,* 104.

conduct. In the hagiographic section, the saint is depicted as an imitator of Christ, embodying this ideal. Finally, the audience is urged to imitate the saint's example.[46]

The structure of *Hom.* 29 seems to include 3 parts: it includes an allegorical explanation of *John 10:9-16,* a brief retelling of the life of Saint Pancratius, and an allegorical rereading of the saint's life. In his allegorical interpretation of *John 10,* Philagathos once again demonstrates a remarkable level of originality and divergence from established authoritative sources in his exegesis. This characteristic, which is evident in some of his other homilies, underscores his creative approach to scriptural interpretation.[47]

The process of offering an allegorical interpretation for the hagiographic part of the homily focuses on two primary methods, i.e., one based on etymology and another on historical interpretation, both shaped by a Christian exegetical worldview. The first method, involves drawing meanings from the linguistic roots of proper names and common terms, often revealing hidden spiritual truths that align with Christian teachings. The second method, interprets historical events or actions in the saint's life as allegories that reflect broader theological concepts or moral lessons, presenting these events as symbolic of Christian virtues or spiritual struggles.[48]

In his allegorical interpretation of the hagiographic material contained in *Hom.* 29, Philagathos first turns to the birthplace of Saint Pancratius, interpreting the history of the city of Taormina and its events in relation to the saint. This allegorization is crafted within a Christian worldview, where every aspect of the city and its past is imbued with moral and spiritual significance. For example, the three idol statues that the saint destroyed are interpreted as representations of the soul's struggle against evil impulses. According to Philagathos, these idols symbolize the vices and negative impulses that must be resisted, with the process of

46 Re, "Esegesi scritturistica e agiografia nell'omelia 20," 159-160.
47 *Ibid.,* 156-159 and 161-164.
48 *Ibid.,* 164.

resistance being framed through etymological interpretation of the names of the statues. Those are positioned in the city of Taormina, a city whose founders were also interpreted by Philagathos as part of allegorical etymology and were explained by incorporating a Platonic analysis of the tripartite soul. The name of the saint himself is also subjected to etymological analysis, linking it with the city's founders and underscoring his personal spiritual battle within this context of sin and vice.[49] The homily culminates in the closing paragraphs, where Philagathos calls the audience to imitate the saint's struggle and virtuous life. This call for spiritual imitation ties together the allegorical interpretations of both the hagiographic narrative and the broader moral message, urging the audience to strive toward the same virtues that Saint Pancratius embodied.[50]

On Imitation: Exegetical or Purely Pedagogical?

When examining the homilies related to saints, it becomes evident that they can be categorized into two distinct homiletic genres,[51] i.e., those that aim to elucidate the liturgical reading of the day and those that serve a pedagogical purpose, focusing on teaching the audience a particular subject, most likely chosen by Philagathos himself.[52] Mario Re in his research differentiates between homilies that engage in exegetical readings and those that do not. Those that include exegetical readings are distinguished from purely pedagogical homilies by a key feature, i.e., the call to imitate the saints by Philagathos.

49 *Ibid.,* 164-167.

50 *Ibid.,* 167.

51 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric: The Sermon on the Mount as Message and as Model in Augustine, Chrysostom and Luther* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 32-33.

52 By that I look at the homilies, as Fr Damaskinos of Xenophontos said, as "texts characterized as 'rewritten Bible' […] not commentaries, but rather a re-realization of the scriptural narrative, revealing the true, spiritual meaning of these passages − all this is integrated into the narrative itself." The role of the homily is not only to instruct the faithful in how to live as virtuous Christians, but also to provide interpretation and elucidation of the biblical narrative and not just 'provide a systematic list of quotations of biblical verses." Fr Damaskinos of Xenophontos, "John of Damascene's Homily on the Withered Fig Tree (CPG 8058): Parable in Action, or Exegetical and Panegyrical Preaching in Interaction," in *Hymns, Homilies and Hermeneutics in Byzantium*, ed. by Sarah Gador-Whyte and Andrew Mellas (Brill: Leiden, 2021), 34.

According to my understanding of Re's framework, through this synthesis, the pedagogical aims are achieved by providing a unified allegorical narrative that connects the hagiographic and liturgical elements. Importantly, the call to imitate the saints is intentionally limited in scope. Rather than urging his audience to undertake a full, historical, and physical imitation of the saints' lives, a feat Philagathos deemed impossible for his listeners, he reduces the acts of the saints to an allegorical level. This reduction transforms the saints' lives into accessible spiritual examples, allowing the audience to engage in a lesser, more attainable form of imitation. As Re observes, Philagathos' call to imitate the saints is thus not a call to replicate their extraordinary physical feats but rather an invitation to emulate their spiritual experiences and moral virtues, making the lessons practical and relevant for his lay audience. [53]

As I have previously explained, my selection of Homilies 20 and 34 is informed both by a partial questioning of Mario Re's framework and by my own observations derived from the process of translating these homilies. While at first glance, a surface-level reading of these homilies may render their pedagogical nature less apparent; I would like to argue that both are representative of the pedagogical genre. The absence of an explicit call to imitate the saints in these homilies does not diminish their pedagogical intent within the context of Philagathos' broader theological and rhetorical objectives. *Hom.* 20, as I will demonstrate, is an example of a pedagogical-exegetical homily, marked by a clear relationship between its hagiographic and liturgical components. Philagathos uses the miracles of Saint Nicholas of Bari to construct an exegetical framework that ties hagiographic details to the spiritual lessons derived from the *Sermon on the Mount*. *Hom.* 34, on the other hand, represents a pedagogical homily in form, though it lacks the exegetical component traditionally associated with this genre. Instead, it addresses a subject of profound significance for Philagathos: the Christian response to death and the exemplification of proper attitudes, emotions, and behaviors in such contexts. This

53 Re, "Le omelie liturgiche con sezione agiografica di Filagato da Cerami," 226-227.

homily reflects Philagathos' concern with preparing his audience for spiritual challenges by offering guidance on coping with loss and maintaining a virtuous mindset, even in the face of death. In both homilies, Philagathos' words carry a didactic quality, demonstrating his intent to teach and guide his audience in spiritual and moral matters, regardless of the explicit presence or absence of a call to saintly imitation.

This understanding challenges questions raised by Re's framework by revealing how Philagathos achieves pedagogical objectives through diverse rhetorical and interpretative strategies.[54] These two main parts are further divided into two subcategories: the historical-literal part and the allegorical part. The historical-literal part deals with explaining the historical context of both the liturgical reading and the life of the saint, providing a factual narrative that grounds the homily. In contrast, the allegorical part seeks to interpret these narratives symbolically, offering deeper spiritual and moral lessons to the audience. Re's exclusion of Homilies 20 and 34 from his primary analysis stems from the central importance of the interconnectivity between the allegorical readings of the liturgical and hagiographic sections. In his framework, this interconnectivity is a defining feature of Philagathos' approach, allowing the allegorical interpretation of one part to illuminate and complement the other. The degree of this connection could vary: it might be superficial, where the allegorical themes are loosely linked, or pervasive, where the liturgical and hagiographic parts are intricately interwoven, creating a unified exegetical message.[55] To me, in such allegorical way, Philagathos underscored the timeless and cyclical nature of salvation history. His homilies served not only as reflections on the past but also as calls to live in the present with an awareness of this continuity, offering his audience a sense of participation in the eternal Christian story.

54 *Hom.* 6 is another such an example. In this homily, Philagathos applies an exegetical reading to the death and resurrection of Lazarus with a pedagogical intention, proposing Jesus as a teacher for the proper way of grieving: Duluș, "Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami", 61-66

55 Re, "Le omelie liturgiche con sezione agiografica di Filagato da Cerami", 215-216.

A deeper investigation into *Hom.* 20 and 34 is indeed warranted, particularly given their nuanced structures and thematic focuses. These homilies, while deviating from the typical format observed in Philagathos' works, provide unique insights into his pedagogical aims and theological approach. Despite the lack of detailed hagiographic content about the saint, homily 20 delves into how Saint Nicholas and his miracles were perceived by those who revered him. This exploration serves as a reflection of the saint's cult and its broader significance. Philagathos uses these perceptions as a springboard to connect the saint's example with the liturgical reading of the *Sermon on the Mount*. Through allegorical interpretation, he takes a pedagogical approach to emphasize moral and spiritual teachings derived from the scripture, using the saint as a symbolic figure rather than focusing on historical details. *Hom.* 34 presents a more complex case, as it lacks both a liturgical reading and a clear allegorical connection. However, it gains significance when viewed alongside other homilies, such as *Hom.* 6, which also addresses themes of salvation history and the ultimate reality of death. In this homily, Philagathos reflects on the Christian approach to mourning and the afterlife, using the death of Bartholomew of Simeri as a focal point. While the homily does not call for imitation in the traditional sense, it offers a meditative framework on how Christians should confront mortality, emphasizing emotional and spiritual readiness. This perspective once more aligns with Philagathos' overarching pedagogical goal: to prepare his audience for the realities of salvation history by fostering a deeper understanding of their faith and its implications.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates my attempts at formulating a new typology and amethod of reading a number of the homilies of Philagathos of Cerami. For that, I used research done previously on three homilies in his corpus, i.e., *Hom.* 1, 26 and 29. The typology proposed here relies on the relation between the parts of the homilies that contain liturgical and hagiographic sections and on whether or not the saints whose hagiographic sections belong to are more than a mere rhetorical device, used to introduce the main, liturgical part of the text. Type 1 of the typology, presented by *Hom.* 26, represents the furthest of rhetorical connection between the hagiographic and liturgical subject matter, while type 3, represented by homilies 1 and 29, is the most coherent with its intended aim in combining both with the hagiographic and liturgical content into a singular program of education for the audience.

Type 3 is further distinguished by Philagathos' approach to the imitation of saints. His method involved simplifying the means by which individuals could emulate the saints, likely in response to the broader trend in Byzantium, where skepticism toward saints and their miracles had become increasingly prevalent. Consequently, the extraordinary physical feats and miraculous occurrences traditionally associated with sanctity were reframed as accessible spiritual exercises, allowing for the internalization and practice of Christian virtues as conveyed within the text.[56]

56 *Ibid.*, 228-230.

Chapter 2: The Saints as Tools for Ascending the Mountain and Escaping Jail

The following section of the present thesis will be dedicated to my own translation and analysis of relevant passages from *Hom.* 20 and 34. After having established the tripartite typology of the homilies in the previous chapter, here I will provide a detailed explanation of my reasoning for selecting *Hom.* 20 and 34 for examination, as well as the rationale behind their allocation within the typology I have proposed. Through this analysis, I aim to clarify how these homilies relate to the broader framework of Philagathos' homiletic practice and their place within the spectrum of hagiographic and liturgical content and the relationship between the Italo-Greeks and their saints.

Homilies 20 and 34: An Introduction

The familiarity of the Italo-Greeks with the cult of saints can be traced all the way to the saints of Late Antiquity, martyrs, apostles and the Church Fathers with a change forward, the eremitic and wandering types of the eighth century with the likes of Nicholas of Bari and the contemporary Bartholomew of Simeri.[57] But the later part of the period, during the ninth and the tenth centuries, saw the political separation of Italo-Greek sainthood from Constantinople and then, in the later parts of the eleventh century, the involvement of the Normans in many hagiographical stories or outright involvement and sponsorship of Italian saints. Those later days saints were known for the eremitic lifestyle on one hand, but, on the other, for their many foundations of monasteries and roles as spiritual fathers, a topic that

57 Paul Oldfield distinguishes between two primary categories of saints: first, the apostolic, martyrial, and early ecclesiastical exemplars of sainthood; and second, the later model characterized by eremitic and itinerant holy figures. Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy*, 32-33. See further: Mario Re, "Telling Sanctity in Byzantine Italy," in *Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World: A Companion to Byzantine Italy* vol. 8, ed. by, Salvatore Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 609-640; id., "Italo-Greek Hagiography," in *Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. by Stephanos Efthymiadis (Ashgate Publishing: 2011), 227-258.

Philagathos addressed throughout his homilies. The saints, in most cases, found themselves representing the various communities they wandered into against the ruling political class, from the Byzantine officials to the papacy of Rome and Norman elites.[58]

In *Hom.* 34,[59] Philagathos addressed the death of Bartholomew of Simeri, using it as a framework to reflect on the Christian approach to mourning and the afterlife. Distinct from other homilies, this one does not include a liturgical reading section. Instead, Philagathos turned to a more nuanced interpretation of the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Lazarus. Through this lens, he delves into the appropriate mindset, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that Christians should cultivate when confronting the death of a loved one and contemplating the soul's journey to the afterlife. By drawing on the Lazarus narrative, Philagathos provides a theological and moral guide for his audience, emphasizing hope and spiritual preparation rather than despair. This homily thus serves as both a tribute to Bartholomew of Simeri and a pedagogical tool for navigating grief through a Christian perspective.

Inn *Hom.* 20,[60] Philagathos used the miracles of Saint Nicholas of Bari as a prelude to an exegetical exploration for the *Sermon on the Mount.* Through this approach, Philagathos seeks to underscore the saint's extraordinary power and the honor he received in the afterlife, both from humanity and from God. In my opinion, Philagathos appears to position Saint Nicholas as an exemplar, whose life and miracles serve as a model for the audience.

58 Enrico Morini, "Monastic Life and Its Institutions", in *Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World: A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, Vol. 8, ed. by Salvatore Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 118-120, 124-126. Anthony Via, "Eastern Monasticism in South Italy in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", in *Nova Doctrina Vetusque: Essays on Early Christianity in Honor of Fredric W. Schlatter, S.*J, eds., Duglas Kries and Catherine Brow Tkacz (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 266.

59 Filagato da Cerami, *Omelie per I vangeli domenicali e le feste di tutto l'anno*, ed. Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi, vol. 1, *Omelie per le feste fisse* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1969), 233-238. All further reference to the text of the homilies, by number and paragraph as well as specific page numbers, are to Taibbi's critical edition.

60 *Hom.* 20, 131-137.

1. Homily 20: On the Feast of Saint Nicholas

Traditions and miracles of the cult of Saint Nicholas

When compared to most homilies with hagiographic elements, Homily 20 on the Feast of Saint Nicholas stands out for its notable lack of historical details about the saint's life. Instead, it centers on a brief account of one of his posthumous miracles, a narrative that Philagathos claims to have personally witnessed. To illuminate the textual and intellectual tradition underlying this homily, three primary avenues of investigation will be pursued. First, this inquiry will examine the popularity and dissemination of the saint's cult, with particular attention to the nature of the miracle described by Philagathos. I will explore whether the miracle at sea, a central theme in the homily, was a common motif within the cult and why Philagathos chose to highlight the presence of a Muslim passenger praying to Saint Nicholas. This aspect raises questions about inter-religious dynamics and the saint's broader appeal in a multicultural Mediterranean context. The second avenue is the interpretation of *John 10:10* in the homily's opening paragraph. The homily opens with a brief exegesis of *John 10:10*, which is particularly striking when juxtaposed with the later focus on the Sermon on the Mount as the daily liturgical reading. Analyzing Philagathos' use of this passage may shed light on his interpretative strategies and how they reflect his theological priorities or broader exegetical traditions and how it may relate to Saint Nicholas. In this chapter, I aim to try and trace back the possible models for Philagathos' interpretation of *John 10:10*. The third avenue of investigation will delve into the textual tradition and interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, particularly the Beatitudes, as presented in the homily.

The widespread veneration of Saint Nicholas situates his cult at a fascinating intersection of cultural exchange. While its origins are deeply embedded in Byzantine traditions, extending across both the Byzantine heartland and its Italian periphery, the cult's fame and devotion to its titular saint were further disseminated by the Normans and their Latin

devotional traditions.[61] The cross-cultural diffusion, traversing diverse geographic and cultural boundaries, positions the cult of Saint Nicholas as a remarkable phenomenon of intercultural connectivity. This perspective provides a plausible explanation for the familiarity of a particular Muslim passenger with Saint Nicholas, as recounted by Philagathos in his homily. The miracle, described by Philagathos, involves a sailing voyage that went awry in the Straits of Sicily. During the crisis, the Muslim passenger is said to have invoked Saint Nicholas, reflecting not only the saint's widespread renown but also the permeability of religious and cultural traditions in the Mediterranean world. This episode, central to the homily, underscores the cult's universal appeal and its capacity to transcend religious boundaries:

> And I learned about this from many and experienced it both. So all of us bringing about prayers to the lord with tears, a certain Ishmaelite man sailing with us had nothing on his lips but the great Nicholas, adding (to that) the prominent place, where the dedicated part of the temple of the saint is built, [the Muslim] would have not done anything of this, unless he was familiar with the miracles of the saint.[62]

The setting of the event described in Philagathos's homily is particularly significant, as it aligns with a well-established topos within the cult of Saint Nicholas, his widespread popularity among sailors. One of the earliest and most influential narratives in the spread of Saint Nicholas's cult in the west is the *Praxis de Nautis*, which recounts the saint's intervention in saving sailors during his lifetime and the miracle of Demetrios, recorded in the Synaxarion for the eastern Christian audiences.[63] This association of saint Nicholas with the protection of seafarers became a foundational element in the Greek tradition of his legends. This close connection between Saint Nicholas and sailors can be partly attributed to the topography of his

61 A perfect example of the popularity of the cult of St. Nicolaus can be deducted from the amount of thefts of the Saint remains out of Myra to Bari and from Bari, abroad: On the theft from Myra to Bari in 1087: *Translatio Barium anno 1087* (BHL 6179, 6190), To Venice c.1100: *Historia de translatione monachi anonymi Littorensis* (BHL 6200), to Benevento c. 1105: *Adventus Sancti Nicoli in Beneventum,* in *Atti della società storica del Sannio,* vol. 2 (1924), 131-162; And finally, to Lotharingia, c. 1105: *Qaliter reliquiae B. Nicolai ad Lotharingiae villam quae Portus nominatur delatae sunt, in Recueil des historiens des croisades,* vol. 5, 293-294. Also see n. 65 below for the popolarity of the cult among the Normans themselves.

62 *Hom.* 20, 2-3.

63 Gustav Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos:* Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche. Texte und Untersuchungen, vol . 205-209 (1913).

shrine in Myra, which was primarily accessible by sea. This geographical context fostered a natural and mutually beneficial relationship between the saint and those who traveled by sea whether they came from Latinized western Europe or the Greek East."[64] The significance of this topographical explanation becomes even more apparent when considering the broader Mediterranean context, particularly in the 12th century. During this period, Southern Italy, situated at the crossroads of major maritime routes, saw a significant increase in naval activity due to trade, commerce, and warfare. This historical backdrop further solidifies the association between Saint Nicholas and seafaring, suggesting that Philagathos's account of the miracle fits seamlessly within this long-standing tradition. By invoking one of the most common tropes within the cult of Saint Nicholas, Philagathos reinforces the homily's underlying message, using the saint's established reputation as a protector of sailors to underscore his own theological and moral interpretations. Equally important is the mention of a Muslim traveler on the ship, which reflects the multicultural and religiously diverse environment of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily. Muslims were a significant presence in the kingdom, from the population of Palermo to their roles at the king's court, and as traders throughout the Mediterranean[65]. This historical reality enhances the plausibility of Philagathos's narrative, grounding it in the religious and political dynamics of the 12th century. The inclusion of a Muslim passenger not only adds depth to the miracle story but also highlights the interconnectedness of different cultures and faiths in the Mediterranean world, further enriching the homily's resonance with its audience.

64 See Especially: Dawn Marie Hayes, *Roger II of Sicily: Family, Faith and Empire in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020); and "The Cult of St Nicholas of Myra in Norman Bari, c. 1071 -c.1111." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 67/3 (2016), 492-512. For the development of Nicholaus of Bari in the Norman kingdom. Geographically and spiritually located between the two worlds of St. Nicholas.

65 See the many works by Alex Metcalfe: "Before the Normans. Identity and Societal Formation in Muslim Sicily", in *Sicily: Heritage of the World*, eds., Dirk Booms and Peter John Higgs (London: The British Museum, 2019), 102-119; *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the end of Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2003); *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

While a detailed examination of Philagathos's use and interpretation of John 10:10 will be conducted later in this chapter, a preliminary investigation raises the question of whether his exegesis reflects his own interpretation or draws from earlier sources. The placement of this pericope and its interpretation in the opening paragraph of the homily invites closer scrutiny, as it serves to frame the broader theological and narrative context of the text.

> When the Lord called his own sheepfold into his divine court, he promised to grant that "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10.10). What is he saying? that they would become heirs of eternal life, and after their departure from here, receive even greater honor from all people. These, I consider, by prophesying the festivals, which we celebrate in honor of the saints. For to those over there having the benefit of the liberty of approaching before God, now they share some of their grace with us, we honor them with feasts and celebrations. But all of the saints find reverence from amongst the people, whether in places, where they were pleasing to God, venerated to the highest degree, or in places where the treasure of their sacred relics is buried, or in places where they demonstrated miracles of grace.[66]A different interpretation of the same passage can be found in *Hom.* 29.11 :"He means that life through the Gospel signifies regeneration, and abundance signifies the kingdom of heaven. Those who died through disobedience not only live by believing but also become participants in the heavenly kingdom."[67]

Based on the available evidence and research, Philagathos' exegesis of John 10:10 offers a remarkably original interpretation, asserting that the origins of the cult of saints were prophetically established by God. While parallels can be drawn to the writings of Cyril of Alexandria, where connections between saints and this pericope are addressed, Philagathos' perspective uniquely frames the cult of saints as a divine prophecy, an interpretation that distinguishes his approach within the broader exegetical tradition.[68] Philagathos' originality is further emphasized by his explicit acknowledgment that these reflections represent his own thoughts: ταύτας, **οἶμαι**, τὰς πανηγύρεις προλέγων, ἃς τοὺς ἁγίους τιμῶντες πανηγυρίζομεν.[69]

66 *Hom.* 20. 1.

67 *Hom.* 29. 11.

68 Cyril of Alexandria. *Commentarius in Isaiam Prophetam.* PG 70: 1365. It is worth mentioning that John 10:10 makes another appearance, in homily 29.11 of the Philagathonian collection: "He means that life through the Gospel signifies regeneration, and abundance signifies the kingdom of heaven. Those who died through disobedience not only live by believing but also become participants in the heavenly kingdom."

69 *Hom.* 20. 1.

Building on his personal reflections regarding the origins of the saints' festivities, Philagathos transitions in his homily to the daily Gospel reading: the Sermon on the Mount. Beginning with Matthew 4:25, he presents a distinctive interpretation of the geographical regions mentioned in the text, which describe the areas from which followers of Jesus came to hear his sermon: Γαλιλαία γὰρ κατακυλιστὴ ἑρμηνεύεται. The claim that Philagathos uses the term ἑρμηνεύεται ("is interpreted") to introduce his analysis of the regions mentioned in Matthew 4:25 may indeed suggest that he is drawing upon an earlier source or exegetical tradition. Despite efforts to trace the origins of Philagathos' interpretation of the regions in Matthew 4:25, no parallels have been identified in the works of Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, or other known homilies on the Sermon on the Mount. This absence of direct antecedents suggests the possibility that the source Philagathos relied upon has been lost. This phenomenon is not unprecedented; M. Duluș has documented similar instances throughout Philagathos' corpus, where interpretations or textual elements appear to draw on sources no longer extant.[70] Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that Philagathos' interpretation of the regions mentioned in Matthew 4:25 likely originates from such a lost source or one made himself.

In the final portion of the homily, Philagathos turns his attention to the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, drawing heavily on Gregory of Nyssa's celebrated *Orationes VIII de Beatitudinibus*. Thanks to the meticulous research conducted by Duluș, the depth of Philagathos' reliance on Gregory's work is now well established.[71] Philagathos explicitly acknowledges Gregory of Nyssa, referring to him as the authoritative interpreter of the Beatitudes with *Orationes viii de beatitudinbuss* as the source.[72] Philagathos supplements Gregory's interpretations with other references drawn from Basil of Caesarea's *Asceticon*

70 M. Duluș," Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami". In many places thoughout his work.

71 *Ibid*, 202, n. 719.

72 *Hom.* 20. 9.

Magnum sive Quaestiones. These references, though brief, integrate additional ascetic elements into the homily, enriching its theological framework.

It can thus be concluded that Philagathos' engagement with Gregory of Nyssa in his homily reflects a straightforward appropriation of key passages from Gregory's *Orationes VIII de Beatitudinibus*, alongside an explicit invocation of Gregory's name as a source of theological authority. This strategic reference to Gregory enhances the credibility of Philagathos' exegesis while aligning his interpretations with a revered patristic tradition.

Local Miracles and the Beatitudes

Philagathos began *Hom.* 20 for the feast of Saint Nicholas with situating the festivities for Saint Nicholas within the broader framework of Christian celebration and devotion. Following this introduction, he transitions into a panegyric, extolling the saint's virtues and miracles. What stands out in this homily is Philagathos' exegetical use of John 10:10, which states, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Philagathos interprets this passage as a prophecy of the festivities honoring saints like Nicholas, whose miracles serve as manifestations of the "abundant life" promised by Christ. To bolster his argument, Philagathos recounts a miracle of Saint Nicholas that he claims to have witnessed personally. This anecdote is not only a testament to the saint's divine power but also serves as a vivid example of the intervention of saints in the lives of believers. In his narrative, Philagathos describes how sailors caught in a perilous storm in the Straits of Messina cried out for Saint Nicholas' help. According to Philagathos, the saint appeared in their hour of need, calming the sea and ensuring their safe passage:

> Indeed, the great miracle worker Nicholas with the gifts of miracles, surpassed all the saints, as much also did the honors given to him by all. And just as no place is without a share in his grace, so no one was excluded from his festivities: For he does not work miracles only among the faithful, but from the boundless of grace he spreads his gifts outside the borders of mystery. And I learned about this from many and experienced it both. For once while I was sailing around the season of the setting of the Pleiades through the Sicilian strait, which in between

> the city of Reggio and Sicily has the water flowing like flux and the weather being foul and unfavorable for navigation, suddenly a violent storm and hurricane having arisen threatening a terrible danger.[3] For a mist has spread under the sky, and all was full of clouds on all sides, and the winds, striking against each other, stirred up the sea.It inspired a tremendous fright and shocked everybody's minds, for it happened that the ship was carried under the waves towards that place […] So all of us bringing about prayers to the lord with tears, a certain Ishmaelite man sailing with us, had nothing on his lips but the great Nicholas, adding (to that) the prominent place, where the dedicated the temple of the saint is built, [the Muslim] would have not done anything of this, unless he was familiar with the miracles of the saint. Thus, the saint is beloved even to unbelieving barbarians.73

The shift in Hom. 20 from Saint Nicholas to the Sermon on the Mount may initially appear abrupt, but a closer examination reveals that this transition is deliberate and deeply allegorical. Philagathos uses the miracles of Saint Nicholas not merely as standalone anecdote but as an allegorical steppingstone to construct a pedagogical framework for his audience. For example, Nicholas' role as a mediator and protector embodies key virtues praised in the Sermon, such as mercy and peacemaking. The miracles also serve as symbolic manifestations of the spiritual abundance and divine grace promised in Christ's words. They further symbolize the virtues and divine grace that Christians are called to emulate, thus reducing the call to imitate the saint to a more accessible, spiritual level.

Philagathos begins his exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount in Hom. 20 with a quotation from Matthew 4:24: "At the time large crowds followed Him from all Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan". This passage sets the stage for his exegetical approach by highlighting the widespread nature of Christ's appeal. Philagathos first provides a historical-literal interpretation of the text, explaining the gathering of the crowds in a straightforward manner:

> See now, how many have gathered together from the cities to become followers of Christ, even if they were still enslaved to the physical senses [and] unresponsive to experience divine teachings.[74]

73 *Hom.* 20. 2-3.
74 *Hom.* 20. 4.

Here, he acknowledges the diversity and multitude of those who followed Jesus but also critiques their limited understanding, noting that their initial adherence was tied to physical and sensory experiences rather than a true grasp of spiritual truths. Following this historical reading, Philagathos transitions into an allegorical interpretation, focusing on the mention of the five cities: Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region beyond the Jordan:

> But not even allow it to escape your hearing, that is the mention of the five cities, from which those who were following the Lord set out, all of the entire world was prefigured, as much as the Gospel firmly preached.[75]

In this allegorical explanation, Philagathos interprets the five cities as symbolic representations of the universal reach of Christ's teachings and the inclusivity of the Gospel message. The cities prefigure the spiritual gathering of all peoples, emphasizing the global and eternal significance of Christ's reach:

> For Galilee is being interpreted as decadent, those from Decapolis acted as ambassadors of Israelite nobility for upholding the ten commandments, then they were drawn to evangelical nets, but also from those in that Jerusalem that deny the prophetic word, by denying the words of the prophets, even these came into the faith. And those portions of sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors, as if from like kind of Judea, through confession they were introduced to the Church; for Judea is interpreted as the portion having sinned against God, but also the confession. And indeed, those beyond the Jordan who are far from baptism, they receive rebirth from the baptismal font.[76]

In the subsequent paragraphs, Philagathos moves on to an exploration of those who are described as "blessed" in the Beatitudes, which, in his view, forms the core message of the homily. This section represents a pedagogical framework for his audience, offering a roadmap for spiritual ascent and moral development. The virtues described in the Beatitudes are presented not merely as abstract ideals but as practical steps or "ladders" that believers must climb in their journey toward holiness. These virtues serve as a guide for those striving to achieve spiritual perfection, a strong faith, and a committed Christian way of life. By emphasizing the progressive nature of these virtues, Philagathos underscores the aspirational

75 *Hom.* 20. 4.
76 *Hom.* 20. 5.

quality of Christian discipleship, encouraging his audience to aim for lofty spiritual ambitions, even if the ultimate goal remains challenging and distant. Moreover, Philagathos aligns this moral and spiritual ascent with the promise articulated in John 10:10: "I Have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Philagathos suggests that striving for these virtues is a necessary path for believers to access the abundant and fulfilling life promised by Christ and exemplified by Saint Nicholas.

The loose connection, characteristic of Type 2 homilies, between the hagiographical and exegetical parts of *Hom.* 20 is evident in the miracle narrative presented by Philagathos. The story emphasizes the saint's outreach to those "beyond the mysteries" and "far from baptism," underscoring the universal appeal and inclusivity of Saint Nicholas's miracles. However, when comparing the analyses of Re and Gaşpar on other homilies, the connection between the hagiographic and exegetical sections in *Hom.* 20 remains tenuous at best. To address this gap and reinforce the coherence of the homily, I argue that the overarching intent of combining the hagiographic and exegetical elements is pedagogical: to guide the audience toward embracing a Christian way of life, characterized by virtuous living and spiritual ascent. The implicit connection between these two sections can be discerned in the thematic unity around the rewards of a life devoted to virtue and faith, as articulated in the first and eighth paragraphs of the homily. In the opening paragraph, Philagathos states:

> What is he saying? (that) they would become heirs of eternal life, and have higher reverence from all after the transition from here. These, I consider, by prophesying the festivals, those revered saints we celebrate. For to those over there having the benefit of the liberty of approaching before god.[77]

This phrase sets the tone for the homily, emphasizing the privilege and reward of nearness to God. Later, in paragraph 8, he elaborates on the rewards awaiting those who ascend the "mountain of virtues":

77 *Hom.* 20. 1.

> But what are the prizes? The kingdom of heaven, comfort, inheritance of the heavenly realm, the satisfaction of good things, being with God and seeing him eternally.[78]

The figure of Saint Nicholas is portrayed in *Hom.* 20 as one who has attained the highest spiritual rewards, embodying the pinnacle of Christian virtue and faith. The connection between the hagiographical details of Saint Nicholas and the exegesis of the *Sermon on the Mount* lies in the Sermon's central role within Christian teaching. As Jaroslav Pelikan observed: "It is the *Sermon on the Mount*, more perhaps that any other portion of the Gospels, that has provided them with the content of Christian obedience to the welcoming invitation and the demanding summons of Christ."[79] It serves as an ideal framework for Philagathos' pedagogical aims, offering a template for moral and spiritual striving. Similarly, the enduring popularity and importance of Saint Nicholas among the Italo-Greek and Norman communities cannot be overstated. Nicholas's miracles, veneration, and role as a cultural and religious symbol resonate deeply within these traditions. His widespread cult, particularly in the Italo-Greek world, provided an accessible and powerful model for emulation. By presenting Saint Nicholas as one who exemplified the virtues extolled in the *Sermon on the Mount*, Philagathos bridges the hagiographical and exegetical elements, crafting a unified message.

In my opinion, the rhetorical structure of *Hom.* 20 underscores the connection between the biblical audience of Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* and the contemporaneous audience of Philagathos, reflecting a shared diversity in faith, background, and spiritual engagement. The multitude that stood before Jesus, hailing from different walks of life within the faith, outside the faith, and on its peripheries is paralleled by those who venerated Saint Nicholas. This includes individuals like the Muslim man in Philagathos' narrative, who, despite being outside the Christian faith, recognized the divine might of Saint Nicholas and his miraculous ability to preserve and protect those who prayed to him. This broad recognition may explain why

78 *Hom.* 20. 8.
79 Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric*, 36.

Philagathos chose to downplay the hagiographic details of Saint Nicholas' life, assuming his audience's pre-existing knowledge of the saint's miracles and legacy. Instead of reiterating familiar stories, Philagathos shifts focus to broader spiritual lessons, effectively weaving the saint's narrative into the exegetical framework of the *Sermon on the Mount*. I think Philagathos acknowledges the abrupt transition between the hagiographical and exegetical parts of the homily by grounding his opening in John 10:10, which celebrates the spiritual rewards promised to God's saints. This opening sets the stage for an allegorical reading that equates these rewards with those proclaimed by Jesus during the *Sermon on the Mount.* Furthermore, the diverse audience addressed by Jesus in the Sermon, spanning geographical and social boundaries is mirrored in the universal outreach of Saint Nicholas' cult. Just as Jesus' teachings aimed to inspire a multitude, Philagathos' homily endeavors to connect his audience, regardless of their standing, to the broader Christian faith through the allegorical interpretation of the Sermon.

Unlike saints who are explicitly presented as models for emulation, Saint Nicholas is portrayed primarily as a powerful intercessor and miracle worker. This distinction is evident in the concluding paragraph, where Philagathos calls upon Saint Nicholas and the other saints to intercede on behalf of the faithful, aiding them in their ascent of the "mountain of virtues." Rather than urging the audience to imitate the saint's life, Philagathos positions Saint Nicholas as a mediator whose spiritual authority supports the audience's efforts to achieve Christian virtues. The absence of the call to imitation by the audience and the saint characteristic of homilies analyzed by scholars like Mario Re places *Hom.* 20 in a nuanced position within my typology of Philagathos' homilies, while it provides clear connections between the hagiographical elements of Saint Nicholas and the exegetical focus on the *Sermon on the Mount*. Homily 20 thus stands, in my opinion, within the homilies of type 2. Its structure demonstrates a deliberate, albeit less tightly woven, connection between the saint's cult and

the liturgical exegesis. The hagiographical narrative and exegetical commentary share thematic elements, particularly the focus on spiritual rewards and virtuous living, but remain distinct in their rhetorical and allegorical aims.

The cycle of grieving and the nascent cult of Saint Bartholomew of Simeri

To date, the extant literature concerning Saint Bartholomew of Simeri is limited to three primary sources: (1) a Greek hagiographic account of his life, (2) Homily 34 composed by Philagathos of Cerami, and (3) an anonymous *encomion* written in his honour posthumously. While the authorship of both the *Bios* and the *encomion* remains uncertain, it is highly probable that Philagathos of Cerami authored these two works as well.[80] In the homily, it is evident that Philagathos possessed both personal familiarity with Saint Bartholomew of Simeri and a deep appreciation for his teachings, as he addresses his audience, a monastic gathering of "fathers and brothers", with a tone that reflects both intimacy and reverence.[81] A plausible, albeit unsubstantiated, hypothesis of mine, is that the *Encomium* was delivered before an assembly of monks at the Monastery of the New Hodegetria in Rossano, while the Homily was preached to a broader audience at the Monastery of San Salvatore. The latter was founded by Saint Bartholomew of Simeri with the support of the Norman monarchy shortly before his death and was constructed under the leadership of his successor, Lukas

The Proper Way, and Reason to Grief: Bartholomew of Simeri and the Death of Lazarus

In *Hom.* 6, Philagathos opens with a deeply personal lamentation for the death of his friend, the first cantor of the Church of the Savior of the Promontory in Messina. He admits his own struggles in coping with grief, describing himself as one "not strong to struggle against the pain at the parting of friends taken away by death, but truly uninstructed."[82] This initial

80 Morton, "Latin Patrons and Greek Fathers", 21.
81 See the *encomion* in Greek and a Latin translation: *Acta Sanctorum* sept VIII 797-801.
82 Duluș, "Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami", *Hom.* 6.1. 88.

admission frames the homily as both a personal reflection and an exploration of grief through the lens of Christian theology and biblical exegesis. Philagathos then moves on from his personal grief to an interpretation of the biblical story of the widow and her son, resurrected by Jesus (Luke 7:11-17). He links the narrative to his own mourning, stating "Therefore [the death of my friend] provoked me to this [discourse], so that I seemed to be in that place and to behold the tragic events."[83] In my opinion, by placing himself within the biblical story, Philagathos uses the resurrection narrative as a means of processing his loss while simultaneously providing his audience with a theological framework for understanding death and the afterlife. This dual approach, personal lamentation intertwined with biblical exegesis, exemplifies his ability to weave intimate experiences with broader theological reflections. Philagathos enriches his exegesis with references to ancient texts, Church Fathers, and Byzantine writers, presenting a cohesive and rhetorically sophisticated discourse. His lamentations, whether personal or embedded within his sermons, reflect the ancient traditions of mourning, which Henry Maguire characterizes as the typical, irrational behavior of violent eccentric movements of the body alongwith the uncomposed grief of shedding of tears and shredding of garments as shows of untrained grief. On the contrary, those who truly understand Christian matters observe a much calmer demeanor, with an understanding that the afterlife is the true reward after death.[84] This sets the stage for his exploration of the "proper way" to mourn, which he develops by focusing on the behavior of Jesus as a model for emotional conduct. According to M. Duluș, Philagathos uses Jesus as a teacher of emotions, contrasting grotesque displays of lamentation with the restrained, purposeful behavior demonstrated by Christ. By doing so, Philagathos offers a

83 *Hom.* 6.7.

84 Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 98-105.

corrective to untrained grief, urging his audience to emulate Jesus' composed and spiritually informed response to death.[85]

Hom. 34, delivered on the feast of St. Bartholomew of Simeri following his death, provides a profound reflection on the Christian perspective of death, mourning, and sainthood. In this homily, Philagathos challenges conventional expressions of grief, asserting that the death of the righteous should be a cause for celebration rather than lamentation. He critiques violent and irrational displays of mourning, dismissing them as behaviors belonging to "those suffering from madness."[86] Instead, he emphasizes the theological and spiritual significance of death within the Christian framework, particularly when it involves a saintly figure such as Bartholomew of Simeri. Philagathos builds his argument by anchoring it in the Christian understanding of sainthood and the veneration of saints. He explores the purpose of festivities commemorating saints, focusing on the transformative nature of their death as a passage to eternal life and as a moment for the faithful to celebrate their union with God. In my understanding, the death of Bartholomew, in this context, is not an end but a transition into glory, offering the living an opportunity to reflect on their own spiritual journey and their hope for salvation. The homily also addresses the pedagogical challenge of guiding the "truly uninstructed" in the proper way to confront death and grief. Philagathos uses Bartholomew's death as a didactic tool, illustrating how believers can find solace in the Christian promise of eternal life and the enduring presence of saints as intercessors. I assume that by reframing death as a moment of triumph and spiritual fulfillment, Philagathos offers his audience a model for mourning that aligns with Christian teachings and eschews the despair and chaos often associated with grief.

85 Duluș, "Rhetoric, Exegesis and Florilegic Structure in Philagathos of Cerami," 61-82.
86 *Hom.* 34. 3.

The connection between *Hom.* 6 and *Hom.* 34 emerges prominently through M. Duluș's investigation into Jesus as a teacher of emotions, particularly focusing on the correct way to mourn the passing of an individual. Both homilies explore the tension between natural expressions of grief and the Christian theological perspective on death, using biblical narratives and saints' lives to frame the discussion. *Hom.* 6 briefly touches upon the subject of death:

> "Let us first ask what the resurrection of the dead means to the Savior. For it has been believed that death transfers a person from corruptable and earthly things to a life free from suffering (For the final death became an act of kindness, according to the words of the Theologian), cleansing the irrational nature that had been attached to the soul."[87]

The homily begins with a commemoration of the death of Bartholomew of Simeri, introducing celebratory hymns and eulogies that are framed within the Christian understanding of death. Philagathos contrasts this Christian perspective with the attitudes of Jews, Pagans, and Greeks, for whom, he claims, "death was considered fearsome and [they] considered it the greatest of all evils"[88] and "for the ancients, the resurrection was hopeless, and they regarded death as a condition of pestilence […] limiting their hopes of life to present life."[89] Philagathos strongly critiques excessive mourning, describing those who lament as exhibiting behavior "nothing different from those suffering from madness" and he further states that lamenting is an offense and state of hostility toward God himself.[90] The critique of lamentation aligns with Philagathos's broader pedagogical goal of reshaping his audience's emotional responses to align with Christian virtues and faith in the promise of resurrection.

Philagathos then goes on to elaborate on the merit of death within the Christian worldview, emphasizing that the knowledge of resurrection is the fundamental reason for celebration. He highlights that this understanding sets Christians apart from the people of

87 *Hom.* 6. 3.
88 *Hom.* 34.1.
89 *Hom.* 34.2.
90 *Hom.* 34.3.

ancient times, who lacked such knowledge. For Philagathos, the resurrection is not only a promise but also a transformative revelation that redefines the experience of death, turning it from a source of despair into a cause for hope and joy: "We, having learned that departure of life is removal from evil to a better place, we take delight and celebrate in songs."[91]

Using the parable of Lazarus once again to discuss death, Philagathos draws upon Mark 5:39: "Not dead, but sleeping,"[92] to equate death with the soul awakening in a "better place." From what state of existence does the soul awaken? According to Philagathos, the soul emerges from the irrational existence imposed upon the corporeal form by the "founder of our people," who "was drawn into wickedness and was joined by unintelligent beasts." Death, then, marks a return to rationality, where, "shedding all irrationality, we return to our default state of [spiritual] cleanliness."[93] The emphasis is placed on the dichotomy between the soul and the corporeal body. The body, and life within it, is likened to a prison, wherein the soul is trapped by the bounds of earthly passions.[94] Death, in this context, becomes a transitional phase, from the material life, so burned with earthly corrupting passions, to the heavenly state of life, cleansed of every passionate disposition that was present in the earthly life.[95]

> Further on in the homily, by paragraph 9, Philagathos revisits the story of the resurrection of Lazarus and poses a poignant question: "And if death is good, why Christ wept for Lazarus?" He then provides an answer:But those raising those questions seemed to be unaware that he shed tears not for Lazarus but rather for his fall from sin […] rather to a higher degree, possibly in a more mystical manner, he cried for Lazarus not because he died, rather because he was resurrected.[96]

In conclusion, Philagathos presents, the proper (in his view) reasoning for lamentation as being centered not on the departure of the deceased but on the hardships and trials the soul had to endure during its earthly existence. He asserts that one should weep for the sufferings

91 *Hom.* 34.2.
92 *Ibid.*
93 *Hom.* 34.3.
94 *Hom.* 34.4.
95 *Hom.* 34.5.
96 *Hom.* 34. 9.

endured in life, recognizing the soul's struggles against the passions and irrationalities of corporeal existence. However, this grief is to be tempered by joy and hope, as death marks the soul's liberation and transition to a better, purer plane of existence in the afterlife. In my opinion, this duality of mourning acknowledging the trials of life while celebrating the promise of eternal peace reflects Philagathos's broader theological perspective on death as a fulfillment of divine purpose and the ultimate return to the soul's original, rational state.

By this point, Philagathos returned to Saint Bartholomew of Simeri, asking: "how could we not celebrate his falling asleep in death as a cause of joyous festivities?"[97] This rhetorical question links the broader theological discussion on death as a positive, transitional phase to the specific example of the saint's death. Bartholomew is portrayed as now residing in a better state of existence, closer to God and liberated from earthly passions. From paragraph 10 onward, Philagathos shifted focus to recounting the life of Saint Bartholomew, framing him as a unique figure in his generation who "among us in this generation, emulated the ancient saints."[98] He highlighted the saint's pursuit of an ascetic life, emphasizing Bartholomew's persistent efforts to live in isolation in the mountainous regions of Calabria. However, the narrative also underscored the saint's failure to fully achieve this secluded life due to the widespread recognition of his virtue. His fame attracted masses of followers, wherever he went, compelling him to engage with the broader Christian community rather than retreat entirely into solitude.[99]

> The most interesting part of the homily emerges at the end of the final paragraph, where Philagathos expresses his opinion regarding Saint Bartholomew. Philagathos' admiration for Bartholomew elevates the saint to a level of sanctity emphasizing his relevance as a model for the current generation.I am also convinced that he intercedes on behalf of us, his children, with God and spiritually accompanies us in the present,

97 *Hom.* 34.9.
98 *Hom.* 34.10.
99 *Hom.* 34.10-12.

> watching that we keep his teachings without corruption, and that may it be for us to follow his footsteps and to become partakers of eternal goods.[100]

It is evident that the primary focus of *Hom.* 34 is the theological exploration of death as a transitional phase to a greater existence, while the occasion of Saint Bartholomew's death serves as a contextual anchor for this broader discussion. However, if one considers the inverse relationship, it could be argued that the homily's thematic discourse on death and proper Christian mourning practices is framed within the specific context of Bartholomew's passing. The central theological portion of the homily emphasizes the positive aspects of death as a step toward a higher, eternal existence, contrasting it with the hardships of earthly life. Philagathos elaborates on the soul's release from the burdens of the corporeal form, portraying death as a moment of liberation and purification. This message is framed within a Christian understanding of proper grieving, one that prioritizes celebration over lamentation and aligns with the spiritual hope of resurrection. The hagiographic portion, though brief, provides a concise narrative of Saint Bartholomew's life, highlighting his virtues, asceticism, and enduring influence on his community. Philagathos includes a plea for imitation, encouraging his audience to emulate Bartholomew's faith and dedication: "and that may it be for us to follow his footsteps."[101]

In conclusion, when attempting to categorize *Hom.* 34 within my proposed framework for the homilies, two key factors emerge as central to the analysis: one is the absence of an attached daily liturgical reading; unlike other homilies where the liturgical reading serves as a foundation for the exegetical discourse, *Hom.* 34 stands apart by relying solely on biblical narratives and interpretations chosen and elucidated by Philagathos. The second is the chosen subject matter of the homily; Philagathos focuses on a thematic exploration of death, intertwining biblical stories with his interpretations to offer a Christian perspective on mourning and the transition from earthly life to eternal existence. The hagiographic details,

100 *Hom.* 34. 15.
101 *Hom.* 34.15.

while present, are secondary to the broader pedagogical goal of instructing the audience on proper Christian grieving practices.

When these elements are tied together, *Hom.* 34 fits firmly between Type 2 and Type 3 of my categorization. This placement arises from the relationship between the hagiographic and thematic parts of the homily. While the two components are united by an overarching interest in the death of a loved one and its Christian implications, the hagiographic details, focused on the saint's life and virtues, serve as supporting material rather than the central focus. My examination of Philagathos' *Hom.* 20 and 34 proposed above reveals the author's rhetorical dexterity and theological depth, as well as his ability to adapt his homiletic style to diverse purposes. Each homily, while addressing distinct occasions and subjects, demonstrates his commitment to the pedagogical mission of guiding his audience toward a virtuous Christian life.

In *Hom.* 20, Philagathos interweaves the miracles of Saint Nicholas with an exegetical analysis of the *Sermon on the Mount*, using allegory to connect the saint's life and actions with the broader Christian narrative of salvation. While the connection between the hagiographic and exegetical parts may seem tenuous at first, Philagathos establishes a thematic unity through the promise of spiritual rewards for those who embody Christian virtues. Saint Nicholas is not explicitly presented as an exemplar to imitate but rather as a figure whose miracles underscore the divine rewards awaiting the faithful.

I *Hom.* 34, Philagathos shifts from personal grief to communal celebration, commemorating the death of Saint Bartholomew of Simeri. By framing death as a joyous transition to a higher spiritual plane, Philagathos presents death not as an end but as a release from earthly suffering and a return to divine rationality. The hagiographic section, while relatively brief, emphasizes Bartholomew's asceticism and spiritual achievements, positioning him as a saint worthy of admiration and potential emulation. The homily's thematic unity lies

in its dual focus on death as a universal Christian reality and the specific example of Bartholomew's virtuous life.

Conclusion

In this thesis I examined the rhetorical and theological role of saints in the homilies of Philagathos of Cerami, emphasizing their integration into both the liturgical and exegetical frameworks of his sermons. By proposing a new typology for analyzing the relationship between hagiographic and liturgical content, I sought to clarify the extent to which Philagathos employs saints as pedagogical tools rather than as mere rhetorical decorations. The core argument of this study rests on the differentiation between three types of homilies, ranging from those where the hagiographic content serves as a superficial introduction to those where it is deeply interwoven with the exegetical themes of the text.

In the introduction, I outlined the significance of Philagathos' homiletic corpus within the broader context of Italo-Greek spirituality and medieval Byzantine rhetorical traditions. I introduced the key research questions that guided this study: How does Philagathos use saints within his homilies? Are they merely rhetorical flourishes, or do they serve a deeper exegetical and pedagogical function? Additionally, I discussed the limitations of previous scholarship on Philagathos' homilies and the need for a new analytical approach. To address this gap, I proposed a three-tiered typology to categorize homilies based on the degree of integration between their hagiographic and liturgical elements.

With Chapter 1, I offered an analysis of selected homilies based on previous academic research, particularly Homilies 1, 26, and 29. I established a framework in which the relationship between the hagiographic and liturgical sections varies significantly. Type 1 homilies, such as Hom. 26, exhibit the weakest connection between these elements, suggesting that the saint is utilized primarily as a literary device to frame the scriptural reading. On the other hand of the spectrum Type 3 homilies, represented by Homilies 1 and 29, demonstrate a more cohesive integration of hagiography and exegesis, reflecting Philagathos' deliberate pedagogical strategy. Homilies of type 2, represented by the homilies I discussed in chapter 2,

are more difficult to recognise as a distinct category because of their non explicit connection between the hagiographical part and liturgical part and require a deeper understanding of the text itself.

In Chapter 2, I further refined this typology through my own analysis of Homilies 20 and 34. These homilies, which have been largely overlooked in prior scholarships, pose a challenge to existing frameworks, particularly that of Mario Re. Hom. 20, dedicated to Saint Nicholas, presents an implicit but meaningful connection between the saint's miracles and the moral teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. While the explicit call for imitation is absent, Philagathos frames Nicholas as an exemplar of divine grace, reinforcing his broader pedagogical aims, thus setting Hom. 20 as Type 2 (in my classification). Hom. 34, on the other hand, focuses on the Christian understanding of death, using the figure of Bartholomew of Simeri as a didactic model. Here, Philagathos shifts the emphasis from a direct call to saintly imitation to a theological meditation on mortality, positioning the saint as a paradigm of the proper Christian approach to death and setting it within the Type 3 of homilies.

One of the major downsides of proposing such a typology is the lack of research into the subject. As mentioned in the introduction, the amount of research done into Philagathos, least his homilies that contained hagiographic details is extremely limited. Thus, elaborating my my own methodological framework required to look deeper into the primary sources, mainly to try and understand how the cult of Saint Nicholas operated and how well known Bartholomew of Simeri might have been within the Italo-Greek community of southern Italy. Thus the implications of this study extend beyond Philagathos' homiletic corpus to broader discussions on Italo-Greek spirituality and Byzantine rhetorical traditions. By reconsidering the function of saints in his homilies, I tried to examine how hagiography was employed not only for veneration but also as a means of moral instruction, whether or not there is an explicit call for imitation of the saint within the text itself.

While previous research has focused primarily on Philagathos' rhetorical style and his engagement with Byzantine theological traditions, my analysis situates Philagathos' work within a more nuanced framework that highlights the interplay between hagiography and exegesis. Limited in scope, my study highlights the need for further analysis of Philagathos' engagement with saints and their cults, particularly in relation to how they were understood and practiced by the Italo-Greek community. Expanding the investigation to include additional homilies with hagiographical content could provide a more comprehensive view of Philagathos' theological and rhetorical strategies, further enriching our understanding of medieval Italo-Greek religious life. Further comparative work between Philagathos' homilies and contemporary Byzantine and Latin sermons could yield valuable insights into cross-cultural influences on medieval Christian preaching.

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