

The Gospel's Voice



Orthodox Parish of the Holy Transfiguration

Number 12, November 2016

Saint John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom c. 349 – 407, Archbishop of Constantinople, was an important Early Church Father. He is known for his preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, and his ascetic sensibilities. The epithet Χρυσόστομος (Chrysostomos, anglicized as Chrysostom) means "golden-mouthed" in Greek and denotes his celebrated eloquence.

He is honored as a saint in the Orthodox churches, which hold him in special regard as one of the Three Holy Hierarchs (alongside Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus).

John was born in Antioch in 349 to Greco-Syrian parents. Different scholars describe his mother Anthusa as a pagan or as a Christian, and his father was a high-ranking military officer. John's father died soon after his birth and he was raised by his mother. He was baptized in 368 or 373 and tonsured as a reader (one of the minor orders of the Church).

As a result of his mother's influential connections in the city, John began his education under the pagan teacher Libanius and acquired the skills for a career in rhetoric, as well as a love of the Greek language and literature.

As he grew older, however, John became more deeply committed to Christianity and went on to study theology under Diodore of Tarsus, founder of the re-constituted School of Antioch.

John lived in extreme asceticism and became a hermit in about 375; he spent the next two years continually standing, scarcely sleeping, and committing the Bible to memory. As a consequence of these practices, his stomach and kidneys were permanently damaged and poor health forced him to return to Antioch.

John was ordained as a deacon in 381 by Saint Meletius of Antioch who was not then in communion with Alexandria and Rome. After the death of Meletius, John separated himself from the followers of Meletius, without joining Paulinus, the rival of Meletius for the bishopric of Antioch. But after the death of Paulinus he was ordained a presbyter (priest) in 386 by Evagrius, the successor of Paulinus. He was destined later to bring about reconciliation between Flavian I of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome, thus bringing those three sees into communion for the first time in nearly seventy years.

In Antioch, over the course of twelve years (386–397), John gained popularity because of the eloquence of his public speaking at the Golden Church, Antioch's cathedral, especially his insightful expositions of Bible passages and moral teaching. The most valuable of his works from this period are his Homilies on various books of the Bible. He emphasised charitable giving and was concerned with the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. He spoke against abuse of wealth and personal property.

His straightforward understanding of the Scriptures – in contrast to the Alexandrian tendency towards allegorical interpretation – meant that the themes of his talks were practical, explaining the Bible's application to everyday life. Such straightforward preaching helped Chrysostom to garner popular support. He founded a series of hospitals in Constantinople to care for the poor.

In the autumn of 397, John was appointed Archbishop of Constantinople, after having been nominated without his knowledge by the eunuch Eutropius. He had to leave Antioch in secret due to fears that the departure of such a popular figure would cause civil unrest.

During his time as Archbishop he adamantly refused to host lavish social gatherings, which made him popular with the common people, but unpopular with wealthy citizens and the clergy. His reforms of the clergy were also unpopular. He told visiting regional preachers to return to the churches they were meant to be serving—without any payout.

His time in Constantinople was more tumultuous than his time in Antioch.

Peace was short-lived. A silver statue of Eudoxia was erected in the Augustaion, near his cathedral. John denounced the pagan dedication ceremonies. Once again he was banished, this time to the Caucasus in Abkhazia.

Around 405, Chrysostom began to lend moral and financial support to Christian monks who were enforcing the emperors' anti-Pagan laws, by destroying temples and shrines in Phoenicia and nearby regions. John wrote letters which still held great influence in Constantinople. As a result of this, he was further exiled from the

Caucasus (where he stayed from 404 to 407) to Pitiunt (Pityus) (in modern Abkhazia) where his tomb is a shrine for pilgrims. He never reached this destination, as he died at Comana Pontica on 14 September 407 during the journey. His last words are said to have been « Glory be to God for all things ».

The Eastern Orthodox Church commemorates him as a "Great Ecumenical Teacher", with Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian. These three saints are commemorated together as the the Three Hierarchs.

Entrance in the Temple of the Mother of God

The 21st of this month, in memory of the Entrance in the TEMPLE of our Sovereign, the MOTHER of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.

When the holy and pure child, granted by God to the human race had reached the age of two, his father Joachim told his wife: « Let us lead her to the Temple of the Lord, in order to fulfill the promise we made to spend at a young age to the Almighty. » But Hannah replied, « Let's wait until her third year as she will claim perhaps his father and mother, and will not remain in the Temple of the Lord. »

When the child reached her third year, the couple decided to fulfill their vow and offer her to the Temple.

The Blessed Virgin was born all pure and elevated by God, from her birth to a degree of virtue and love of heavenly things than any other creature. She was running towards the Temple, without looking at the world or her parents, she threw herself into the arms of the high priest Zachariah who was waiting on the square in the company of elderly people. Zachariah blesses, saying, « The Lord did glorify thy name in all generations. In the last days you will manifest the Redemption he has prepared for his people. » And amazingly for men of the Old Covenant, he put the child in the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest could enter once a year only, the celebration of the day of the Atonement. He made her sit on the third step of the altar and the grace of the Lord covered Mary who arose and danced to express her joy. All those present were delighted at this promising spectacle of the great wonders that God was about to accomplish in her.

Having left the world, parents and any link that could tie her to sensible things, the Holy Virgin remained in the Temple until the age of 12.

Introduced in the Temple at the age when other children start learning, All the Holy, from the inaccessible sanctuary, heard every Saturday the readings of the law and the prophets, which was done in the public part of the Temple. She thus came to the knowledge of the deep meaning of the mysteries of Scripture. Living among the holy things and considering her own purity, she understood what was God's purpose throughout the history of his chosen people. She knew that many centuries

were necessary for God to prepare a mother issued from the rebellious mankind, and that pure child chosen by God, she had become the true living temple of the deity.

When the Mother of God entered the Holy of Holies, the time of preparation and trial of the Old Covenant took end. The feast therefore that we celebrate today is that of engagement of God with human nature. That is why the Church welcomes and urges all friends of God to withdraw, too, in the temple of their heart to prepare for the coming of the Lord in silence and prayer, by evading the pleasures and vain cares of this world.

From the Synaxarion

We are still gathering food stuff and second hand clothes for poor people we meet in the cities and other spots of extrem poverty.

You may bring your gifts to the Church on the Sunday morning.

Thanks a lot.

Divine Liturgy

Every Sunday at 9.30 a.m.

Sunday 6th of November

13th : St John Chrisostom

(14th: Begining of the Nativity's fasting.)

20th: Pre feast of Entrance in the Temple of the Mother of God

27th :

The Orthodox Church of the Holy Transfiguration

Grande-Rivière N-O

Mauritius

(behind Garage BALA)

**Divine Liturgy every Sunday
at 9.30 a.m.**

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