

she dances again; and again desires to receive John's head in a charger," an allusion to the events surrounding the death of John the Baptist. 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.

### Death and canonization

Faced with exile, John Chrysostom wrote an appeal for help to three churchmen: Pope Innocent I, the Bishop of Milan, Venerius, and the third to the Bishop of Aquileia, Chromatius.

Pope Innocent I protested at John's banishment out of Constantinople to the town of Cucusus in Cappadocia, but to no avail. Innocent sent a delegation to intercede on behalf of John in 405. It was led by Gaudentius of Brescia; Gaudentius and his companions, two bishops, encountered many difficulties and never reached their goal of entering Constantinople.

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 404-407) to Pitiunt (Pityus) (in modern Abkhazia) where his tomb is a shrine for pilgrims. He never reached this destination, though, as he died at Cormana in Pontus on 14 September 407 during the journey. His last words are said to have been, "δόξα τῷ θεῷ πάντων ἔνεκεν" (Glory be to God for all things).

John came to be venerated as a saint soon after his death. Three decades later, some of his adherents in Constantinople remained in schism. Saint Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople (434-446), hoping to bring about the reconciliation of these Johannites, preached a homily praising his predecessor in the Church of Hagia Sophia. He said, "O John, your life was filled with sorrow,

but your death was glorious. Your grave is blessed and reward is great, by the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ O graced one, having conquered the bounds of time and place! Love has conquered space, unforgetting memory has annihilated the limits, and place does not hinder the miracles of the saint."

These homilies helped to mobilize public opinion, and the patriarch received permission from the emperor to return Chrysostom's relics to Constantinople, where they were enshrined in the Church of the Holy Apostles on January 28, 438.

The Eastern Orthodox Church commemorates him as a "Great Ecumenical Teacher", together with Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian. These three saints, in addition to having their own individual commemorations throughout the year, are commemorated together on 30 January, a feast known as the Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs.

There are several feast days dedicated to him:

- 27 January, Translation of the relics of St John Chrysostom from Comana to Constantinople
- 30 January, Synaxis of the Three Great Hierarchs
- 14 September, Repose of St John Chrysostom
- 13 November, St John Chrysostom the Archbishop of Constantinople

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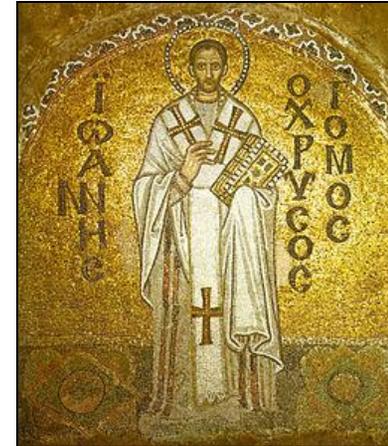
Pamphlet 663

## Saint John Chrysostom

(c. 347–407)

Greek: Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος

The Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches honor him as a saint and count him among the Three Holy Hierarchs, together with St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzus.



A Byzantine mosaic of John Chrysostom from the Hagia Sophia

### Early life and education

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. From Libanius, John acquired the skills for a career in rhetoric, as well as a love of the Greek language and literature.

As he grew older, however, he became more deeply committed to Christianity and went on to

study theology under Diodore of Tarsus, founder of the reconstituted School of Antioch. According to the Christian historian Sozomen, Libanius was supposed to have said on his deathbed that John would have been his successor "if the Christians had not taken him from us".

He 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.

### **Diaconate and service in 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 (that is, a priest) in 386 by Evagrius, the successor of Paulinus. He was destined later to bring about reconciliation between Flavian I of Antioch, the successor of 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 emphasized charitable giving and was concerned with the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. He also spoke against abuse of wealth and personal property:

*Do you wish to honor the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: "This is my body" is the same who said: "You saw me hungry and you gave me no food", and "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me"... What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.*

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.

One incident that happened during his service in Antioch illustrates the influence of his homilies. When Chrysostom arrived in Antioch, the bishop of the city had to intervene with Emperor Theodosius I on behalf of citizens who had gone on a rampage mutilating statues of the Emperor and his family. During the weeks of Lent in 387, John preached twenty-one homilies in which he entreated the people to see the error of their ways. These made a lasting impression on the general population of the city: many pagans converted to Christianity as a result of the homilies. As a result, Theodosius' vengeance was not as severe as it might have been.

### **Archbishop of Constantinople**

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 with these groups. 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. Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, wanted to bring Constantinople under his sway and opposed John's appointment to Constantinople. Theophilus had disciplined four Egyptian monks (known as "the Tall Brothers") over their support of Origen's teachings. They fled to John and were welcomed by him. Theophilus therefore accused John of being too partial to the teaching of Origen.

He made another enemy in Aelia Eudoxia, the wife of the eastern Emperor Arcadius, who assumed (perhaps with justification) that his denunciations of extravagance in feminine dress were aimed at herself. Eudoxia, Theophilus and other of his enemies held a synod in 403 (the Synod of the Oak) to charge John, in which his connection to Origen was used against him. It resulted in his deposition and banishment.

He was called back by Arcadius almost immediately, as the people became "tumultuous" over his departure. There was also an earthquake the night of his arrest, which Eudoxia took for a sign of God's anger, prompting her to ask Arcadius for John's reinstatement.

Peace was short-lived. A silver statue of Eudoxia was erected in the Augustaion, near his cathedral. John denounced the dedication ceremonies. He spoke against her in harsh terms: "Again Herodias raves; again she is troubled;