

St. John Chrysostom



347 - 407

Feast Day:

September 13

John Chrysostom was born in Antioch, Turkey, around the time that the Roman Empire was split into East and West. He converted to Christianity as a young man, and he was baptized when he was 22. For several years he lived in the mountains as a hermit, spending his days praying and praising God in solitude. When he was 37, he returned to Antioch and became a deacon and then a priest. He impressed many people with his powerful and eloquent preaching. He earned the nickname “Chrysostom” which means golden-mouthed. When he was 53, St. John was elected patriarch, or archbishop of Constantinople.

John immediately donated to the poor, sent out missionaries, and ended the extravagant luxury of church leaders in his area. He advised political leaders to end their extravagant luxury as well. His sermons were often critical of the rich and powerful. His preaching and his simple lifestyle made him many enemies. The empress and the bishop of Alexandria charged St. John with heresy and misdeeds. John was exiled (or sent away with orders never to return).

The Pope supported John. He sent five bishops to the Emperor to demand he free John from exile, but the Emperor threw the bishops in prison and exiled John even farther away, to a city on the very edge of the empire. The saint died of exhaustion in 407.

St. John Chrysostom is a Doctor of the Church. The most celebrated Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, is attributed to him. The Byzantine Rite liturgy looks and sounds different from Holy Mass in a Latin rite, but it is still completely Catholic.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS