

Holy Trinity Newsletter

May 2009



St. Constantine the Great, a Mosaic from Agia Sophia in Constantinople.

"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.' And when He had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" *Gospel according to John 20:21-22*

Christ is Risen! Χριστός Ανέστη!

Often in life, no matter what we may be working on, we find it very easy to get distracted, to get off course. Our Lord gave his Apostles and disciples a very clear course of action, very clear directives. They were to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." *Matthew 28:19, 20*. The operative verb in that command is μαθητεύσατε, the word we translate, "make disciples". That was their job, to go make disciples from all over the world. The other verbs in that sentence, grammatically speaking, are called participles; they are there to support the main verb. What are the participles in this case? They are, "go, baptizing, and teaching".

Now, it would be overly simplistic to suggest that this is exactly and all of what God is commanding us today as well, although we are certainly under command to fulfill this role today as well. There are plenty of other verses and sources throughout the Holy Scriptures that could be cited to determine just what our course is as Orthodox Christians. Just what is it that God is calling us to do in this world? What is the point of our being here in Nashville, TN? Again, it is very easy to get distracted with lots of other things, no matter how nice those things may be, and it is very easy to get away from what we are actually commanded and instructed to do.

It is good to remember what St. James, the brother of the Lord reminds us in his catholic epistle, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." *James 2:14-17*

It is very clear from his Epistle that St. James means for us not only to pray for certain things with faith, but to “apply the hands” as well.

A good source for inspiration, for guidance on what work it is we are to participate in, that we are to “work together” with God on is the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. In the Prayers of the offering during the Liturgy of the Faithful, we pray the following,

Remember, Lord, the people here present and those who are absent with good cause. Have mercy on them and on us according to the multitude of Your mercy. Fill their treasuries with every good thing; preserve their marriages in peace and harmony; nurture the infants; instruct the youth; strengthen the aged; give courage to the faint hearted; reunite those separated; bring back those in error and unite them to Your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Free those who are held captive by unclean spirits; sail with those who sail; travel with those who travel; defend the widows; protect the orphans; liberate the captives; heal the sick. Remember, Lord, those who are in mines, in exile, in harsh labor, and those in every kind of affliction, necessity, or distress; those who entreat your loving kindness; those who love us and those who hate us; those who have asked us to pray for them, unworthy though we may be.

Here in the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, among many other things, we ask God to preserve marriages, to nurture infants, to instruct our young people, to give strength to the aged, to give courage to those despairing, to re-unite those separated from us, and so on. Do we expect to then simply say these prayers at Liturgy, and our youth will be instructed in the faith? That would be the ultimate “easy button”! Of course we know it doesn’t work that way. Saying these prayers with faith is important, for, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) But, none the less, as St. James instructs us, we know that we cannot simply pray in faith, or wish well in faith and then do nothing; we have to get to work!

It is our calling, our job, to focus on people, to focus on their salvation. St. John Chrysostom explains that he who is only focused on his own salvation, is already lost! How do we focus on people and on their salvation? What does that mean exactly?

Taking a cue from St. Basil and from our Lord and His disciples and apostles, it means first of all proclaiming the faith in order to “make disciples”. There are many different ways to proclaim the faith, but the important thing to do is, well just that, to do it. It is important for us as a community of faith to realize that if we are not concerned in a loving and thoughtful way with the salvation of our neighbor, we are then already lost ourselves. We must also teach others, as our Lord commanded us to do. It is not enough to bring people into the Church, whether through birth, receiving them into the Church or through missionary effort, we must also continue to teach them, and hence, ourselves the faith. Many have testified that in order to really gain a working knowledge of what you’ve been given is to try to share it with someone else.

Baptizing is also listed by our Lord as Apostolic work, and while it is true that the priest is the one who actually performs the service, he cannot do so unless he has someone to baptize and someone to sponsor them. That is where we all work together, bringing people to the Church, introducing them to the Love of Christ, and gently guiding them to start the journey of being united with Christ through the Sacramental life of the Church. We are called to encourage each other, to build up one another; not to do the opposite, not to tear down. St. Paul writes to the Church in Ephesus, saying,

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may **grow up** in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the **effective working** by which every part does it share, **causes growth of the body** for the **edifying of itself in love**. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

This is our work, this, and much more could be said, is our calling in Nashville, TN. Many of us think much about how Orthodox we are or aren't. Being Orthodox means among many things, being one in Christ. Being Orthodox means having a burning desire to share the truth of salvation with those whom God brings to us to do so. Being Orthodox means knowing that our faith is like a light, that must be shown to give light to a world of darkness, and that Christ Himself is the Jewel of Orthodoxy, is the Light coming into the world that illumines men and grants resurrection to the fallen.

May the Love of God burn in your hearts!

Fr. Gregory

**HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR 2008-2009**

MAY

May 3 - Class

May 10 - Class

May 17 - Class

May 24 - Class

May 31 – Class

June 14th Teacher Recognition Sunday.

JOY Calendar 2008/2009

May 17th: Flower Planting at Church

JOY FAQ

What is JOY age? Here at Holy Trinity JOY age kids are K-5th grade.

What is the purpose of JOY? "The mission of JOY is to strengthen the relationship of young Orthodox Christians with Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The program works to educate and edify young member of the church, encouraging them to become active sacramental participants in the life of the Body of Christ."

How do I join? "Belonging to JOY Ministry depends solely on being and Orthodox Christian. Children are not classified as members or non-members-if they are members of the Faith, they belong!"

*Please let us know if you or someone you know needs to be added to the email list to receive updates.

Anna Horner 376-4861, Carrie Gaddis 739-2330, Bethany Malakelis 662-9817.

Nashville Holy Trinity GOYA

GOYA thanks Angelo Steriotis for his donation and regrets that his name was not added to the Pascha Card this year. Thank you again and please forgive us!

Upcoming Events:

May 23rd: GOYA annual graduation party for Lidia Awad, Nick Bacon, Stella Kamm and Eleni Miller. Congratulations guys! The party begins at 6 pm following Vespers.

June 7: Junior GOYA (Grades 6-8) and JOY pool party after Church.

July 1-6: St. Nicholas Summer Camp at Camp NaCoMe in Centerville, TN!
Please find forms at www.southerncamp.com.

Please check the website under Monthly Liturgical Calendar for Real time updates at: www.holytrinitynashville.org

Sacraments for April 2009!

On April 11, 2009, Lazarus Saturday, the Boonstra Family was received into the Orthodox Church by Chrismation. The Sponsors for Jerry, Sandy, Jackson and Luke are Chris Botsaris, Donna Bacon, and Eric Osterberg respectfully. Congratulations and welcome to the Holy Orthodox Church!

Kiki Sherrill gave birth to a baby boy, "Gus" during bright week, and Athena Vaporis gave birth to a baby girl, "Eleni" on Bright Friday! Να Σας Ζήσους! We look forward to the 40 day baby blessings!
Philoptochos News.

Philoptochos Elections are coming up in May!

Parish News.

On May 3, 2009, a general assembly was held at Holy Trinity and a few votes were taken. The budget was passed after a clear and concise presentation by Bill Phillips, member of the finance committee. Mike Delvizis of the building committee made a presentation on the selection of either the North side or the East side of the existing Church buildings for the proposed Educational and Office building. The parish selected the North side of campus for the new building. Design work will now be underway with Brasfield and Gorrie to determine the floor plan and other features that will go into the overall design plans. A vote was taken and it was decided that the Festival would be three days this year; the usual Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

After 25% of the design work is completed on the proposed new Educational Building, a town hall meeting will be held to discuss the developments of those designs and plans with the community.

The following excerpt on St. John Chrysostom for the 21st Century I found at www.orthodoxinfo.com. It is a fiery presentation and one I enjoyed reading quite a bit. I thought you all might be edified by it as well. It is rather long, and therefore I will be printing it in pieces for our newsletter. Here is the first part, which is an overview of the life of the great Saint of our Church. Next newsletter I will print some more and varied excerpts from this same publication.

Saint John Chrysostom for the 21st Century

By The Very Reverend Josiah Trenham, Ph.D.

I. The Basic Biography of Saint John Chrysostom.

My intention in this lecture is to highlight a number of areas in which I believe Saint John Chrysostom has precious contributions to make to contemporary Christians. I have entitled this lecture, *Saint John Chrysostom for the 21st Century*. Toward that end, however, I would like to begin by making a brief verbal sketch of St John's life, then mention some of the areas in which he has been duly influential throughout the history of the Church, and then, upon that foundation, address Chrysostom's relevance for the practice of contemporary Christianity.

His Birth and Parents. Saint John was born in or around A.D. 349, as best as we can tell, in the city of Antioch. His father, Secundos, was a high-ranking civil servant in the Roman administration, and his mother, Anthusa, was a devout Christian, who has recently been numbered among the saints by the Church of Greece. Her feast day is shared with Saints Nona and Emmelia, the mothers respectively of Saints Gregory the Theologian and Saint Basil the Great. Hence, we commemorate on January 30th the Three Holy Hierarchs, and

shortly thereafter, on the Sunday that falls in the Afterfeast of the Great Feast of the Presentation, the holy mothers of the Three Holy Hierarchs.

Student and Ascetic. For the pedagogical purposes of this lecture I would like you to think of the saint's life as divided into three fundamental portions: his early life as a student and ascetic, his life as priest in Antioch, and his life as bishop in Constantinople. [2] Chrysostom's father died when he was a young boy, and his mother was but twenty years old. She spent the rest of her life completely devoted to John's formation as a Christian and a scholar. As a young man he was enrolled amongst the students of the greatest rhetor of the empire, the pagan Libanius. [3] His education under Libanius followed a traditional Greek mode that had not changed much since the 4th century B.C. It was under Libanius that Chrysostom learned Greek diction and elegance of expression that would serve him so well as a preacher throughout his life. The curriculum was all in Greek, Latin forming no official part of his education, and focused on the classics. Saint John passed through all three stages of the traditional *paideia*: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric with outstanding success. Libanius is said to have remarked in light of his approaching death that of all his students it was John who was most accomplished to succeed him, if it had not been that the Christians had stolen him. Indeed they had, and it would not be the last time in God's providence that he was stolen.

Saint John completed his studies about A.D. 367 and was baptized at the Paschal vigil A.D. 368 by Saint Meletios, who served as the Orthodox bishop of Antioch from approximately A.D. 360 until his death at the 2nd Ecumenical Council in A.D. 381. For three years after his baptism Saint John served in Meletios' presence in the church, and studied the Scriptures in a small monastic brotherhood gathered around Diodore and Carterios. In A.D. 372, with rumors swirling of an impending

ordination, Chrysostom fled to the mountains outside Antioch to struggle against his passions under the tutelage of an elderly Syrian master. By spiritual insight Chrysostom mastered himself during these years, and then retreated to a cave where for an additional two years he memorized the Holy Scriptures and never laid down to sleep. Chrysostom described this period in his life as a time in which he devoted himself completely to prayer by night and Scripture study by day. [4] Through this extreme asceticism Chrysostom broke his health, and returned to Antioch sometime around A.D. 378. Saint John's years as a student and an ascetic would leave a deep impress on his future, and provide the foundation for his powerful ministry as an exegete and preacher of the Holy Scriptures. The inspired content of his preaching ministry was formed in the mountains, and the masterful pedagogical style was formed in his schooling. This combination took the Christian world by storm.

Priest and Preacher in Antioch. After St Meletios' death he was sent back from Constantinople to Antioch to be buried next to Saint Babylas, and Flavian was elected Bishop of Antioch. In his first year as Bishop of Antioch Flavian ordained Chrysostom a deacon. Saint John was 32 years old, and would serve for five years as a deacon. During this period Chrysostom never preached, but launched his writing career, producing pamphlets, letters and essays on various topics, especially on the ascetical life. Besides his liturgical and literary labors, Saint John served Flavian as his personal assistant and liaison in administering charity to the some 3,000 virgins and widows on the doles of the church. In A.D. 386, when Deacon John was 37 years old, Archbishop Flavian ordained him to the priesthood, and appointed him as the city's cathedral preacher. [5] Saint John would serve in this capacity for twelve years. Immediately, Chrysostom launched his preaching career, and from this period on most of the works we have from his pen are, in fact, edited versions of his sermons. Typically, during

his years as a priest, [6] several stenographers recorded his sermons as he gave them in church, and then delivered them to him for editorial work prior to publication. [7]

Bishop in Constantinople. In late October A.D. 397 Asterios, count of the civil diocese of the East and governor of Antioch, summoned Chrysostom to the great martyrs' shrine just outside the Romanesian gate [8] for an important message. Chrysostom assumed that he was to be the courier of some important communiqué from the emperor to the bishop and church. Instead, he was seized by imperial officials, placed inside an imperial coach, and taken 1200 km. to Constantinople, never to see his beloved home city of Antioch again. Bishop Nektarios of Constantinople had died, and John was to be consecrated as his successor, the 12th Bishop of Constantinople. In either mid-December A.D. 397 or on Feb. 26th, A.D. 398 he was consecrated at the hands of Archbishop Theophilos of Alexandria and at the direction of the Emperor Arcadius. For the next ten years Saint John would receive into his heart the people of Constantinople and shepherd them as his flock.

Constantinople was exploding. There were between 200,000 and 300,000 persons in the city of Constantine, which had been consecrated in A.D. 330, a mere six years after Emperor Constantine launched his construction project upon the small town of Byzantium. John took up his pastoral responsibilities immediately and continued with an unbroken stream of preaching and Scriptural commentary until the end of his life. Adjacent to the episcopal chancery was a convent of 250 virgins ruled over by the saintly Deaconess Olympia, who would become Saint John's spiritual daughter and best friend. Chrysostom entered into a visitation of the diocese and its reform. He began where he lived, in the episcopal palace, which had become, under his predecessor, a center of extravagant hospitality for the new upper class of

Constantinople and the clergy. [9] Chrysostom slashed the budget, sold off many precious items stored at the chancery, and used the excess funds to erect at least one hospital. He took most of his meals alone. He reformed his clergy, immediately defrocking a number of deacons, who were guilty of heinous crimes, rebuked the celibate clergy who were living in so-called "spiritual marriages" with virgins, deposed numerous bishops guilty of obtaining their office by simony, brought regulations to the city's monastic brotherhoods, demanded accountability from the women who were enrolled on the church's widows' list by requiring them to live as devout widows or to get remarried, served as imperial counselor, ruled as proëstamenos of the resident synod of Constantinople, [10] served the divine services and preached several times per week, [11] oversaw charitable institutions, kept abreast of civil activities, sought to influence imperial legislation with the Church's teaching, and organized missionary activities. Besides all these duties in the city itself, Chrysostom was asked by surrounding dioceses to adjudicate several cases and oversee controversial elections. The influence of bishop of Constantinople was increasing as the city's size and importance in the empire was increasing.

Chrysostom was not always well-received in his new position of authority. Some of Constantinople's wealthier citizens were offended by his bold rebukes and his willingness to call them to account. Unfortunately, though Chrysostom came to Constantinople as the imperial favorite, by the year 401 he had become somewhat alienated from the Empress Eudoxia. It seems that Chrysostom censured her for allocating to herself a widow's property. Nevertheless Chrysostom baptized the son of the imperial couple, Theodosios II, on Theophany, A.D. 402. In A.D. 403 Chrysostom's consecrator turned arch-enemy, Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria, arrived in Constantinople together with 29 of his Egyptian bishops, took up residence in the imperial palace in Chalcedon in the suburb called "The Oak" and held a iniquitous synod against

Chrysostom. This synod, known throughout history as the "Synod of the Oak," charged Chrysostom with some 29 crimes (many of them beyond the ridiculous), and ended up deposing Chrysostom for not appearing before their illicit assembly. The Synod sent a notice to the emperor of the condemnation and suggested that Chrysostom was treasonous and should be banished. Banished by imperial edict he was, and no sooner had he been exiled than an earthquake struck the city. In fear and trembling the guilty Empress asked her husband, the weak-willed Arcadius, to recall Chrysostom from exile. Chrysostom refused to re-enter the walls of the city until the illegitimacy of the Synod of the Oak had been declared. Peace was re-established, but it was not to hold for long.

Soon the empress decided to have a silver statue of herself placed in the plaza of the Cathedral, had it installed noisily and unveiled during the time while Saint John was celebrating the Divine Liturgy! Discerning the provocation and going along with it, Chrysostom exclaimed in righteous indignation, "Again Herodias dances and demands on a platter the head of John." On Great Saturday, A.D. 404, Chrysostom was confined to the chancery and soldiers were sent to break up the baptismal ceremonies. Blood ran in the font, and more than 3000 catechumens were scattered. An assassination attempt was made on John's life by the slave of one of his priests. On the Thursday after Pentecost, June 9th, enemy bishops forced the imperial hand and on June 20th Chrysostom was banished for the final time. He would spend the next three years in exile. Most of this period was spent in Cucusus in Armenia. He carried on from there a voluminous correspondence. We have over 240 letters extant from this period. From exile he wrote several treatises intended to encourage his Constantinopolitan flock, which was suffering severe persecution from the civil authorities for keeping their allegiance to Saint John. During his exile, Emperor Honorius, brother of Arcadius and Emperor of the West, together with Pope Innocent and leading Bishops

of the West, demanded of Arcadius that Chrysostom be restored to his throne. In A.D. 407, after three years of exile in which Saint John's Armenian place of exile had become a place of pilgrimage for the faithful, Chrysostom was further exiled to Pityus, the very outskirts of the Empire on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. In extreme illness and suffering abuse from the soldiery and barbarians who threatened the expedition, Chrysostom fell asleep in Christ on September 14, A.D. 407 at the age of 58. The company had stopped outside the church of the Holy Martyr Basiliskos. In the night the Saint appeared to Chrysostom and informed him that they would soon be together. Chrysostom asked to be vested, received the Holy Gifts, made his cross, and prayed his last words, "Glory to God for all things."

1. The title "Chrysostom" first was recorded by Pope Vigilius in the year 553: *Constitutum Vigili papae de tribus capitulis* (PL 69:101).

2. This three-fold division is reflected in the subtitle of the most recent scholarly biography of Chrysostom in the English language by J. N. D. Kelly (1995) entitled, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom- Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY. For a more recent contribution in German, but with an English translation, I recommend Rudolph Brändle (1999) *Johannes Chrysostomus: Bischoff- Reformier- Märtyrer*, Köln: Kohlhammer: Berlin. English translation by John Cawte and Silke Trzcionka (2004), Saint Paul's Publications: Strathfield, Australia.

3. Many of Libanius' speeches are extant, and a nice collection exists in English in the Loeb series.

4. Thdr. I.51-52; SC 117, p. 50.

5. So esteemed was Saint John's preaching that he was often asked to preach in the presence of and often in place of the Bishop or Bishops in attendance. Some of his homilies from this period reflect the unenviable position of Chrysostom being the first preacher to be followed by a bishop's delivery. In these cases, though Chrysostom was to inevitably outshine his successor preacher he carefully laced his sermon with appreciation and praise for the bishop so as to soften the transition!

6. Chrysostom's most famous 20th century biographer, Chrysostomos Baur, argued that Chrysostom wrote more than he preached, and that most of what we consider homilies were in fact never preached. Baur is veritably alone in this opinion.

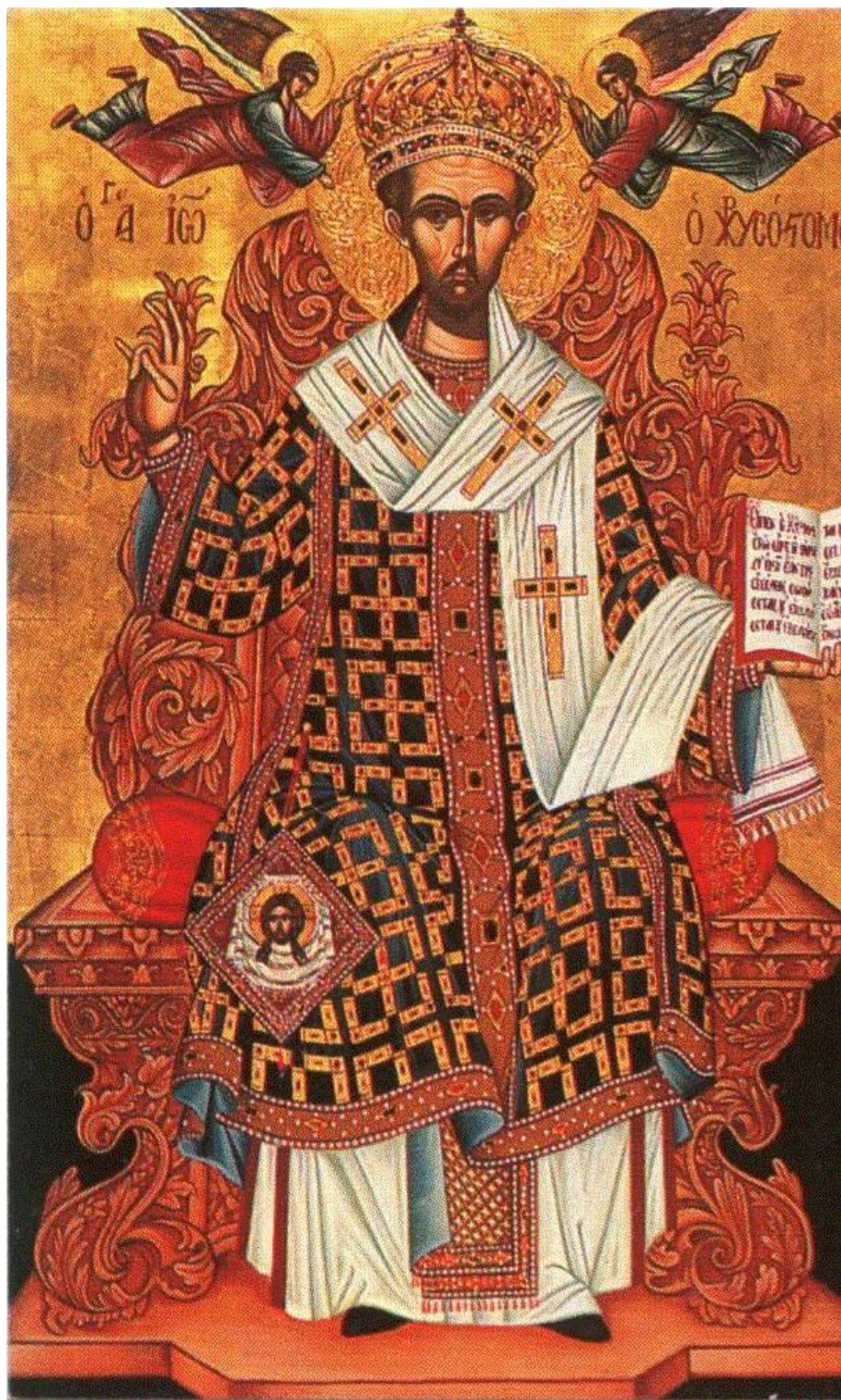
7. Chrysostom's sermons on Hebrews were published by the priest Constantios after Saint John's death. They are taken from stenographer's notes so we can see in them something close to the actual pre-edited homiletic content.

8. It was called this because it led north to Constantinople/New Rome.

9. Bishop Nektarios, Chrysostom's predecessor, had been a favorite of Emperor Theodosios and was elected to the throne of Constantinople while still a layman.

10. The synodos enthemousa came into existence under his predecessor Bishop Nektarios.

11. The Church historian Socrates recorded that Chrysostom preached from the ambo, not the high place, because his voice was not strong.



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