

# ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: A MEANINGFUL REMEMBRANCE

In honoring St. John Chrysostom this year, why not have students remember him in the way that would have meant the most to *him*? St. John was known for the beauty and eloquence of his sermons on scripture. His talks on the word of God held people spellbound and his charismatic public speaking earned him the title "golden-mouth" (chrysostom).

After talking with students about the life of St. John, (use a map that shows Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and if possible, Armenia), ask them to prepare a sermon on the reading of the day. If that particular reading doesn't excite any ideas, propose the following:

Genesis 1 and 2  
Genesis 3 and 4  
Luke 15:11-32  
Luke 16:1-13  
Luke 18:1-8

(These happen to be the readings associated with the Sundays of Lent in the Armenian Church.)

The best sermon can be delivered in church on a subsequent Sunday . . .

## The Life of Saint John

Only son of a general, John was born in Antioch and was given Christian instruction by his widowed mother, whom he supported until her death in old age. John studied law and rhetoric under the famous pagan orator Libanus in Antioch. Melitus, bishop of Antioch baptized John in mature age, and allowed him to devote himself to a life of asceticism and Bible study under the direction of a monk in the mountains near Antioch. A two-year stay in a cave ruined John's health who upon returning to Antioch was ordained deacon by his bishop. Flavian, the successor of Melitus, ordained John a priest in 381 and gave him license to preach, at a time when only bishops had the right to preach. John's reputation as a preacher grew over a period of twelve years, to the extent that the people of Antioch called him "the one with the Golden Mouth."

In 398 John was elected, against his will, Patriarch of Constantinople. His outspokenness and demands for moral reform aroused the antagonism of the wealthy and powerful in the capital, headed by Eudoxia, wife of the emperor Arcadius. Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria became an ally of Eudoxia and held a meeting of bishops opposed to John, and declared him disposed. Arcadius sent John into exile, but a severe earthquake made the emperor decide the quick recall of John. But within a year, John was banished again, first to lesser Armenia, and from there to Pontus. On the road the

frail, 60 year old John died of exhaustion. In 438 his body was returned to Constantinople and was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles, where earlier the body of his enemy Eudoxia had been buried.

John Chrysostom has left numerous homilies in which he presents commentaries on books of the Old and New Testaments. Although his sermons are lengthy, yet they are eloquent and full of concrete and practical applications. He is also the author of a Divine Liturgy, elements of which have been incorporated in the Armenian Divine Liturgy. Many writings of St. John Chrysostom have been translated into Classical Armenian, beginning in the 5th century.



## PILGRIMAGES TO THE CATHEDRAL: A NEW AND SPECIAL PROGRAM

Has your Sunday School community ever visited the Cathedral? This year the Department of Religious Education has launched a special program that will add to your students' and their families' religious education. Bring your student body and their parents to the St. Vartan Cathedral. Take communion, have lunch with us at Diocesan headquarters, be the delighted audience of a special presentation on the Armenian Church, and allow us to direct you to some other special sites in the city! Contact the DRE (Elise at 212-686-0710) for further information and to confirm a date for your school. By the way, a large number of Sunday Schools are close enough to take advantage of this program (from Washington to Providence).



