

# BYZ KIDS

September 2025

## EARLY CHURCH FATHERS



In this edition, you'll journey through the world of the Early Church Fathers. The holy men who helped shape the Church in its earliest days. This issue is packed with faith, fun, and learning !



## Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear ByziParents,

It's almost time. Soon we will have to close the pool, put away the lawn furniture and get back to a "normal" daily routine. For many of us September means Back-to-School, when playtime ends and study begins.

Whether your ByziKids take the bus to school, gather at your table for homeschool lessons, or are inspired to investigate life in an unschooling fashion, study is key. It's time to be still, look deeper, and focus on committing all of the details of truth to memory in order to make the very most of the gift of life.

We encourage our children to study skills like communication through reading and writing, to master concepts and the manipulation of numbers to keep their minds sharp and logic clear. We insist that they understand how the world functions by learning the timelines of civilizations and rubrics of science. Yet often the study of the skills, concepts, and timelines that will lead them toward eternal life with the God who created all of that holds a lower priority.

In this issue about the first teachers of the Faith, the Early Fathers of the Church, we will learn about those who valued the study of God above all else. One of those Fathers, St. John Chrysostom tells us,

We are so concerned with our children's schooling and worldly success. If only we were equally zealous in bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This then, is our task: to educate both ourselves and our children in godliness, otherwise what answer will we have before Christ's judgement seat?

Encourage your ByziKids to study the ultimate Primary Source. Refer to the writings of those who walked with Christ or learned directly from them to gain the clearest understanding of Truth. We hope this issue helps your family to get this catechetical school year off to a great start.

Enjoy this issue!

Lynne



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# INSTRUCTIONS

## Red

Suitable for ages  
0-3/infant & toddler

*We like to start early and include everyone in catechesis! Red activities are provided for little brothers and sisters, the tagalongs, who do not require direct instruction but need something to keep them occupied while the rest of the family participates.*

**Our objective** for these littlest members of the Body of Christ is to introduce them to the theme of the day, making positive connections to each other and to Christ through sensory play.

## Orange

Suitable for Pre-Readers;  
3-6 years

*As pre-readers, these children are best served by hands-on experiences, song, and movement as they learn. Although everything from the red level is still applicable, we can adapt the activities to bring them to the orange level by including more hands-on learning and structured play.*

**Our objective** is to present the theme of the day in an engaging way that involves sufficient movement, creativity, and fun to accommodate the activity level of a child of this age.

## Yellow

suitable for early readers;  
ages 7-9 years

*Children of this age are now able to read functionally, so we can begin to teach them foundational theology points with concrete instruction. They can begin to write about topics as well as create paper projects and use other creative mediums. With a more outward orientation and a new awareness of time, history, and community, at the yellow level, they are more capable of collaborating on projects, although any of the above material may also be of interest to them.*

**Our objective** for this age level is to involve the children in group projects and collaborations so that they can begin to understand and interact as part of a bigger faith community,

## Green

suitable for Pre-teens,  
ages 10-12 years

*This age group is now able to read for comprehension and can apply the teaching they have received to their lives and the lives of those around them. Building on the previous stages, the children in the Green level can delve deeper into the story of salvation and begin to focus on how each is called to participate in this plan and see that Christ is the source of our strength.*

**Our objective** is to use reference tools to explain the topic of the month and encourage the student to feel confident in searching for these tools on his own.

## Blue

suitable for young teens,  
ages 13-15 years

*The young teenage student looks outside his family to the broader community and the world, wanting to understand it and participate in it. We begin to introduce community service ideas and encourage parish participation in various ways so that they can serve both their parish community and the Church at large.*

**Our objective** is to provide ideas that encourage students of this age to remain engaged in developing their own spiritual identity and find support within the Church community.

## Purple

suitable for teens and adults;  
Ages 16+

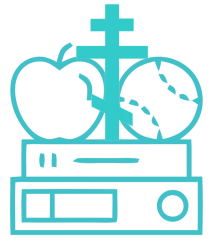
*Learning about the faith isn't just something for childhood, but it is rather a life-long journey that takes us ever closer to God. This group can tackle apologetics, moral life questions, and more challenging concepts and ideas of adult catechesis.*

**Our Objective:** To explore the complex depth of the theme by exploring the writings of the Church Fathers, Scripture, and historical documents. We hope to introduce tools of apologetics, so participants can learn how to defend a position used as a common argument against the theme.



# Building the ByziClassroom

Turning this issue of Byzikids Magazine into a Sunday School, Small Group or Homeschool Lesson is as easy as 1, 2, 3!



1

**Pray...** Use your voices to sing & pray. We suggest an "Our Father," the appropriate Hour, or a Resurrectional Troparion.

Use your ears to hear the Word of God. Read the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday together and complete the corresponding puzzle from page 12 or 13 to review the story. It is fun to copy the puzzle onto a large poster on the wall so the group can solve it together.

Present the icon lesson from page 7 which introduces the children to different styles of travel icons and the Three Holy Hierarchs.

2

**Learn...** Review the catechetical lesson on page 18 discussing who the early church fathers of the Patristic era are.

Reinforce the lesson with a fun new song on page 9 which emphasizes how we learn about God and has hand motions to go along as well this month!

Then, turn to page 16 to learn about St. Cyprian and give the children an idea of the life of the early church fathers.

Let the younger children work on our sensory activity while you are teaching the lesson with the older children.

3

**Play...** It's Mother Mary's birthday this month, so why not throw her a birthday party? The Nativity of the Theotokos is celebrated each year on September 8th. Lay out a blue tablecloth and have the children make tissue paper flowers to decorate. Bake a simple cake and sing "happy birthday" together.

Birdwatching is another fun way to celebrate the Theotokos' birthday. Her mother, St. Anne, saw a nest of baby birds and prayed that she would be blessed with a baby too. God answered her prayer with a yes!

## SNACK TIME!

Make cupcakes this month for your Theotokos birthday party. If you have time, try out the Three Holy Hierarchs Neapolitan Cake recipe found inside on page 10 to tie together both themes!



## SENSORY ACTIVITY!

For this month's sensory experience, we're making cupcakes for Mother Mary's birthday! This cloud dough with sprinkles is easy to make and so much fun to play with! See page 5 for instructions.





# Sense-Ability

When God created us, He made us both body and soul, meaning we are both physical and spiritual beings. We are not like angels that are just spirits. For this reason, when we use our bodies to help us learn, our spirits are changed as well! Have you played with a sensory bin before?

A sensory bin is a small tub or table filled with items that you can touch, smell, taste or make noise with. They typically include items that are all about a particular theme. When we use our senses to help us learn something, it helps our brain to recall the information better.

## Theotokos Birthday

Everyone loves birthdays and we have a particularly special birthday to celebrate this month! September 8th is the birthday of our beloved Mother in Heaven, the Theotokos! For this month's sensory experience, the children will make birthday cupcakes with cloud dough.

### Supplies:

- Ⓒ 2 cups corn starch
- Ⓒ 1 cup lotion (unscented is best)
- Ⓒ 1 jar of sprinkles
- Ⓒ Cup cake liners or cupcake pans
- Ⓒ Scoops or spoons

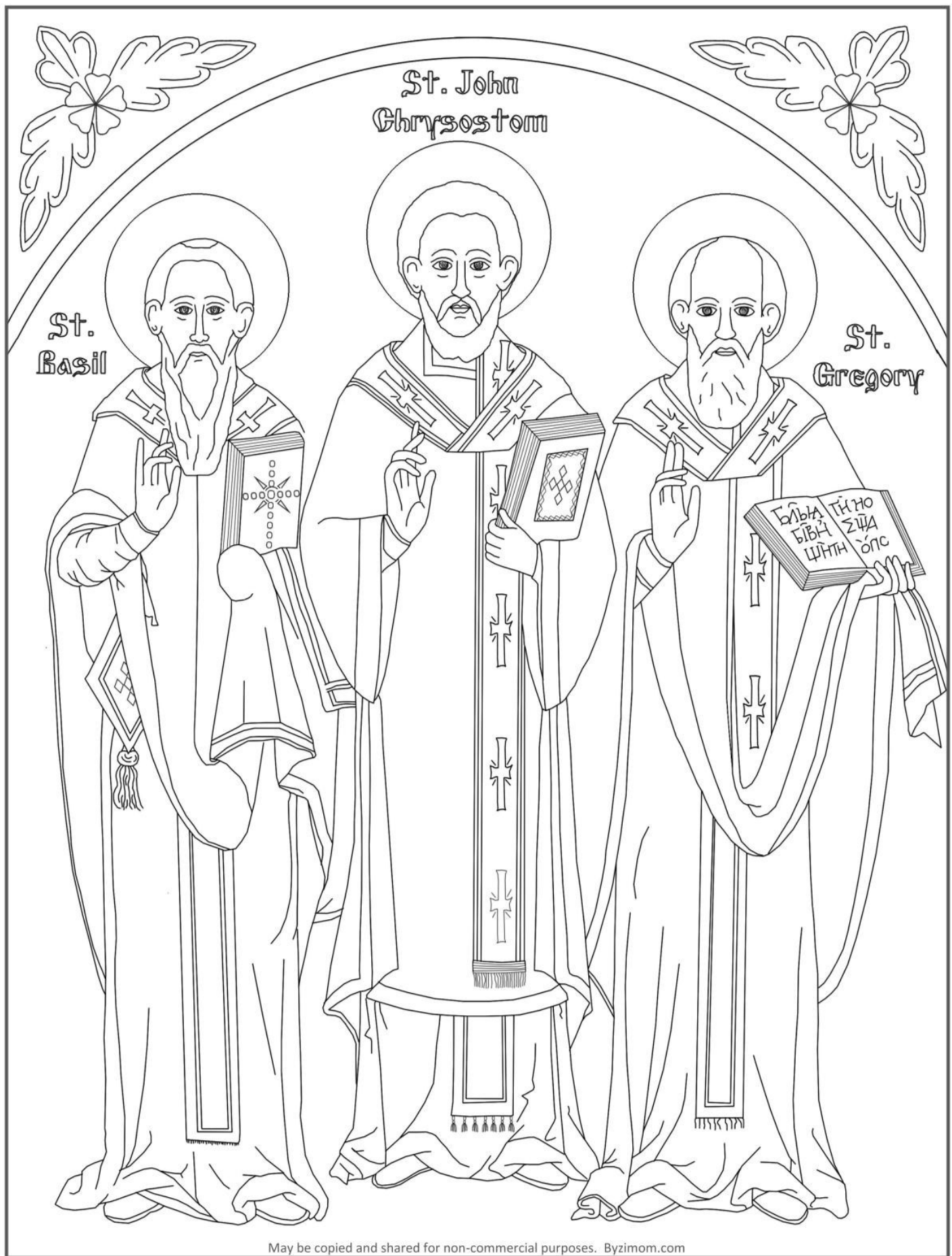
### Instructions:

Knead together the cornstarch, lotion, and jar of sprinkles until the desired consistency is achieved. You will know it is ready when the dough still looks "powdery," but when you squeeze a small amount in your hand, it holds its shape. Add more lotion if the mixture is too dry; Add more cornstarch if it becomes too sticky.

Cover your play surface or take your materials outside. Place the "batter" in front of the children in a bowl along with their spoons, scoops, and cupcake containers. Talk to them about birthdays and perhaps even sing happy birthday to the Theotokos as you play. Sit alongside them as they enjoy this wonderful new texture!







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[Printer-friendly coloring page can be downloaded here->](#)





# I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



By Kim Fritzges

## Early Church Fathers

Our icon this month is a 'travel icon'. A travel icon is an icon that an Orthodox Christian would take with them when they traveled somewhere.

Travel icons can be a small icon on a wooden frame that could fit into a pocket, a small icon that could be worn around your neck by a cord or chain, or it could be a diptych, triptych, or quadriptych icons. These last three were small icon panels, either wood or metal, that folded up for ease of transporting them. A diptych icon had two panels, a triptych icon had three panels, and a quadriptych had four panels.

The icon we have shown is an icon painted in egg tempera with a silver covering and a gold chain. This travel icon is from 1834 and was worn around the neck. It shows The Three Holy Hierarchs; St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Gregory. We see them dressed as Bishops in their hierarchical vestments holding a closed Gospel book, which shows they are teachers and preachers of the Church. All three hierarchs have their right hand raised in a blessing.

Our coloring page is also of the Three Holy Hierarchs. Here they are shown without their mitres on their heads and St. Gregory's Gospel book is open and resting on the phelonion and omophorion on his left hand. St. Basil's hand holding the Gospel book is also covered by the phelonion and omophorion, this is a sign of special respect.

All three Holy Hierarchs were great teachers preaching the Gospel as the Apostles did. They were very influential teachers, developing Divine Liturgy, defending the Orthodox faith, teaching many during their lifetime, and their teaching continues today through their theological writings. We celebrate Divine Liturgies that St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil wrote.

We celebrate the Three Holy Hierarchs on their feast day of January 30th. Hymns of the feast:



### Apolytikion: First Tone

The three most great luminaries of the Three-Sun Divinity have illumined all of the world with the rays of doctrines divine and true; they are the sweetly-flowing rivers of wisdom, who with godly knowledge have watered all creation in clear and mighty streams: The great and sacred Basil, and the Theologian, wise Gregory, together with the renowned John, the famed Chrysostom of golden speech. Let us all who love their divinely-wise words come together, honoring them with hymns; for ceaselessly they offer entreaty for us to the Trinity.

### Kontakion: Second Tone

Receive, O Lord, the Sacred Heralds who preached God, the pinnacle of Teachers, unto the enjoyment of your riches and rest. You have received their labors and their suffering as being above all fruitful offering. For You alone glorify Your Saints.

*Special thanks to Chapman University for allowing us to use this icon. St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. John  
Tempera of Wood with silver frame and gold chain, 1834.  
Gift of Evelyn LaLanne  
Image courtesy of the Escalette Collection of Art at Chapman University*



September 26:

## Celebrate St. John the Theologian with **Eagle Snacks**

Today we commemorate the falling asleep of the youngest of the 12 apostles, John the Theologian. He was the brother of James, son of Zebedee, the fisherman, and Salome who was a relative of St. Joseph. St. John was noted for his purity, his contemplative nature, his undying love for Christ manifest in his presence at the Lord's crucifixion and in his reception of the Blessed Mother into his own care after Jesus' death.

It is said that after the Dormition of Our Lady, John departed for Ephesus where he preached the Gospel and performed many miracles. Persecutions of Christians under the emperor Nero began at this time, and it didn't take long before the apostle was arrested and sentenced to martyrdom. The account of his life from the Prologue of Ohrid tells us however, that God had further earthly plans for His friend. When poison was given to St. John, it took no effect. He was then to be boiled in oil, but climbed out of the cauldron unharmed!

Overwhelmed, the emperor sentenced the saint to exile, on an island called Patmos, where he lived for many years preaching the Gospel to its pagan inhabitants and working many miracles. One day, St. John climbed to a high mountain with his friend Prochorus and underwent a three day fast. During this prayerful time, he told Prochorus to write down whatever he told him. Thus, in the year 67, the book of Revelation was written. This book contains prophecies which are so mystical and fantastic in nature that it is considered very difficult for the average human mind to comprehend. Soon, John was granted his freedom and returned to Ephesus where, in the year 95, he wrote his own Gospel account of his life with Christ, and three of the epistles found in our Holy Scriptures.

After reaching over 100 years old, St. John knew that his time on earth was ending. He instructed his followers to dig a cross-shaped hole into which he climbed. He kissed them goodbye and instructed them to fill in the grave. Later, when the grave was opened, only a fine dust remained, which proved to miraculously heal the sick. Each year on May 8, this miraculous dust would reappear. For this reason, there is a feast of the Apostle, St. John on May 8 as well.

Because of the lofty heights to which this saint was inspired while he was in prayer, his symbol is the eagle. Although the eagle flies higher in the heavens and closer to God than any other bird, it sees and understands what is on the ground even more clearly.



At snack time today, let's give our little saints a treat to remind them of St. John.

For each Eagle Snack, you will need a chocolate sandwich cookie, a marshmallow, two large chocolate chips and a whole cashew. You will also need some melted white chocolate chips and a bowl of shredded coconut.

Melt the white chocolate and roll the marshmallow in it, to coat. Immediately roll it in the shredded coconut, and place it on the cookie as a base.

Last, place on the eagle's cashew beak and chocolate chip eyes and let alone to set while you tell the children the story of St. John.

Do not fear Little Saints! After story time comes snack time!





# CHOIR PRACTICE

By Sylvia Dorham

## True Learning from Proverbs Chapter 2 Lyrics

Oh, my son,  
If you will

**Receive** my words  
And **treasure** my commandments  
Within you, within you

Make your **ear**  
Attentive To wisdom, to wisdom

Incline  
Your **heart**  
To understanding, understanding

Then you will **understand**  
The **fear of the Lord**

And discover  
the **knowledge**  
the knowledge of God.



At the word

**Receive** – hold out your hands and pull them to yourself as if you're receiving a gift

**Treasure** – hold your gift in your hands and rock it back and forth as if you were enjoying it

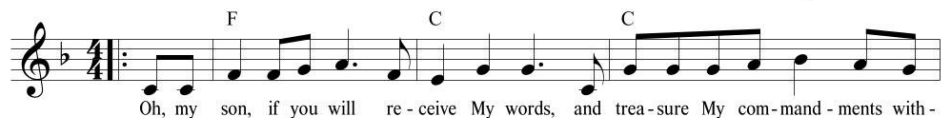
**Ear** – cup your hand behind your ear and lean toward your audience as if listening

**Heart** – put your hand on your heart and lean sideways

**Understand** – point your index finger in the air as if you just had an idea

**Fear of the Lord** – make your eyes wide as if you're seeing something amazing

**Knowledge** – point both index fingers to your head as if you have new knowledge



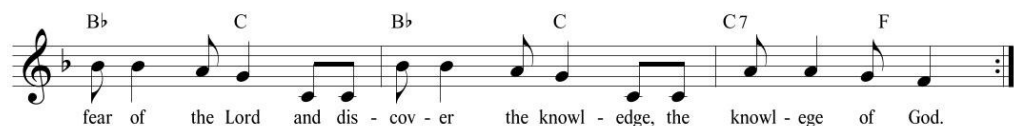
Oh, my son, if you will re - ceive My words, and trea - sure My com - mand - ments with -



in you, with - in you. Make your ear at - ten - tive to wis - dom, to wis - dom. In -



cline - your heart to un - der - stand - ing, un - der - stand - ing. Then you will un - der - stand the



fear of the Lord and dis - cov - er the knowl - edge, the knowl - ege of God.

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# Triple Hierarchs NEAPOLITAN CAKE



In the 11th century, during the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos's reign, there was a heated dispute among the faithful about the greatest of these three 4th-century bishops; Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, or John Chrysostom.

Church tradition tells that the arguments among the people and the clergy continued until the Metropolitan, John Mauropous of Euchaita, had an exciting dream on a night in 1084.

Metropolitan John was also a gifted hymnographer who wrote some 200 canons, which we still use today. In his dream, the three holy hierarchs appeared together and assured him that they were all considered equally important in heaven. They asked him to celebrate their memory together on one date and suggested that he write a particular service and hymns for their new feast!

So Metropolitan John set out to the task of composing the service for the Three Holy Hierarchs. When he had finished writing his hymns, approximately 16 years later, in 1100AD, he instituted the Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs to be celebrated on January 30 since all three saints have a commemoration during that month.

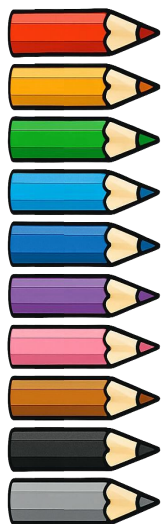
## Ingredients

- Ⓒ One recipe of vanilla cake batter (mix or homemade)
- Ⓒ ¼ cup cocoa powder
- Ⓒ ¼ cup strawberry preserves
- Ⓒ 6-8 drops red food coloring

## Preparation

1. Prepare your baking pan (bundt or 9-inch square or round) by greasing and flouring, or if oil-free line it with coffee filters.
2. Split the cake batter into three equal parts. Set one part aside. Into one other part, stir in the cocoa powder. Into the third part, stir in the strawberry flavoring and red food coloring. Now you have three equally delicious flavors; vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry!
3. Layer the three batters into your prepared baking pan and gently swirl them to achieve a marbled effect, without over mixing! You want to be able to see each separate layer. Remember, like the three holy Hierarchs, each flavor is unique and special and none is better than the others, but together they make a wonderful, (and delicious) whole!
4. Bake at 350 degrees for as long as your recipe indicates then (when a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean) remove it from the oven and allow it to cool 10 minutes before removing it from the pan. Cool completely and dust with powdered sugar before serving.

## My Scripture Study Journal Activity



The Church Fathers studied Christ's teachings and how they related to the Old Testament revelations of who God is and what He desires. Their writings give us a clearer understanding of how to live up to God's plan for us!

If we want to grow in our faith, we must also study the Word of God!

Print the template on the following page to start your own scripture study journal!

Print the page when you hear the Sunday Gospel or read a bible story. You can decorate your journal with colored pencils or stickers. Decorate your Scripture Study Journal however you like and keep it in a place where you can refer to it daily.

Doodling can help you develop your thoughts, so draw a picture of what you imagined when you heard the story. Then answer the prompts. Here are some ideas to make your journaling experience successful:

- Before you meditate on the story you heard or read, pray to the Holy Spirit and ask for His guidance as you consider it. He will help you learn what's important about the reading.
- Ask an adult about things you may not understand in the reading, and write their answers down as soon as possible to ensure you remember their explanation well.
- You can always re-read your entries and edit what you wrote as your understanding increases or if you get any new impressions or thoughts later on.





# My Scripture Journal



Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Today I read about:



My favorite verse is:

*(Write the verse that touched your heart most.)*



Who are the characters in the story?



Which one is my favorite and why?



What lesson is God trying to teach me?



Here is what I learned:



My prayer today:

Dear God,

Amen.



Picture It! Draw something from today's reading below:

# Caught You Listening

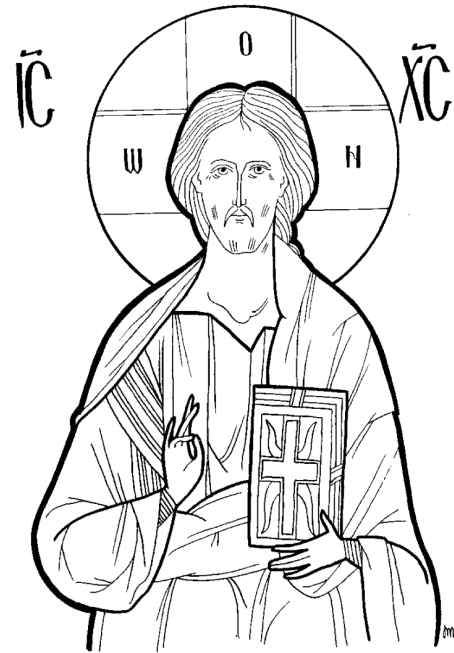
**SEPTEMBER 7, 2025—SUNDAY BEFORE THE HOLY CROSS**

○ **Gospel: John 3:13-17**

Today's Gospel includes one of the most famous verses in the Bible, John 3:16.

Put the words of the verse in order and write them below.

That Believes Loved But Gave In Should For Whoever  
Life Him He Eternal Only Not World God His  
The Have So Son That Perish



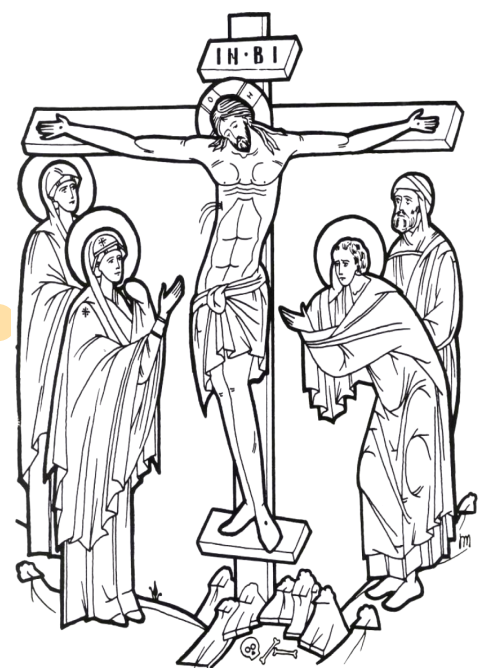
**SEPTEMBER 14, 2025—EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS**

○ **Gospel: John 19: 6-11; 13-20; 25-35**

Today's Gospel tells us a lot about a certain leader who had a lot to do with the Crucifixion.

Below are some things this leader says. Find the letter indicated and write it on the line. Read the letters to find out the name of the leader.

- "You will not speak to me?" (4th word, 2nd letter).
- "Here is your King!" (2nd word, 1st letter)
- "Take him yourselves and crucify him."  
(3rd word, 7th word)
- "Where are you from?" (2nd word, 1st letter).
- "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews"  
(3rd word, 7th letter)
- "What I have written, I have written."  
(3rd word, 4th letter).





## SEPTEMBER 21, 2025-SUNDAY AFTER THE HOLY CROSS

### ○ Gospel: Mark 8: 34-9:1

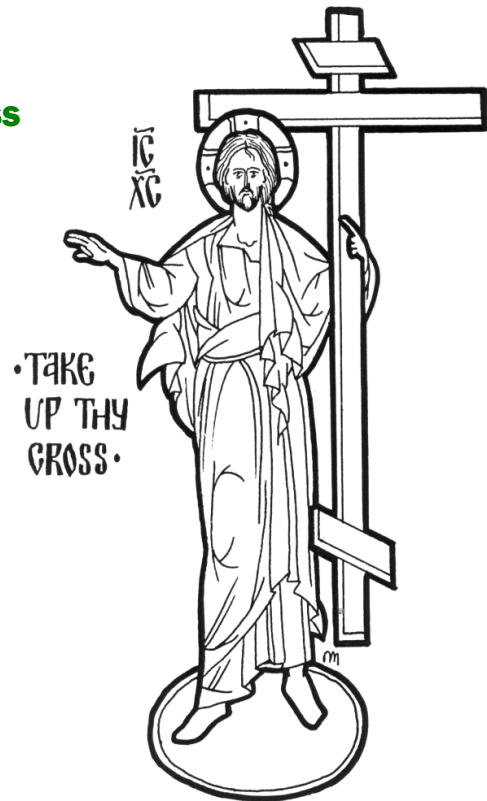
The verbs are missing from this verse in today's Gospel. Fill in the blanks from the word bank.

"If any man would come after me, let him \_\_\_\_\_ himself \_\_\_\_\_ up his cross and \_\_\_\_\_ me. For whoever \_\_\_\_\_ his life for my sake and the gospel's will \_\_\_\_\_ it."

Word Bank:

belong mark deny journey swallow climb take

follow loses open lifts serves save drive



## SEPTEMBER 28, 2025-MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH

### ○ Gospel: Luke 5: 1-11

In today's Gospel, what did Jesus say Simon Peter would be doing from now on?

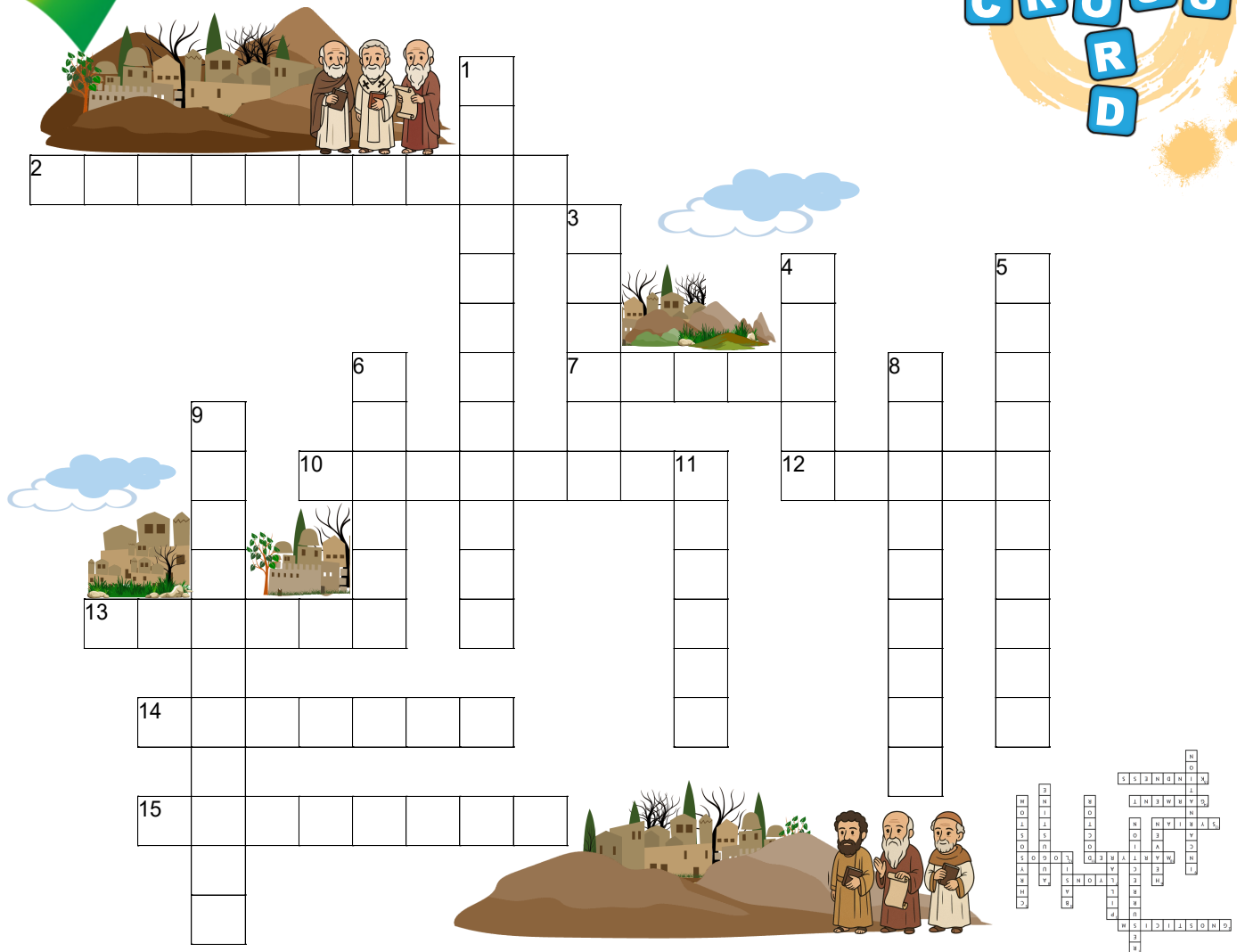
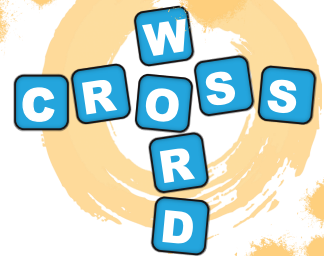
Write the previous letter of the alphabet above each letter to find out.

D B U D I J O H N F O



Icons used are courtesy of Iconographics

# EARLY CHURCH FATHERS



## Across

2. St. Clement of Alexandria fought against \_\_\_\_\_
7. St. Irenaeus of \_\_\_\_\_ worked against heresies and the unity of the Church.
10. St. Ignatius of Antioch was \_\_\_\_\_ by being thrown to the lions
12. St. Justin Martyr was an interpreter of the "\_\_\_\_\_"
13. St. Ephrem the \_\_\_\_\_ wrote 'Glory to you, who laid your cross as a bridge over death
14. As a moth gnaws a \_\_\_\_\_, so doth envy consume a man. -- St John Chrysostom
15. "He who plants \_\_\_\_\_ gathers love." -St Basil

## Down

1. St. Isaac Of Nineveh said The greatest sin is not to believe in the power of the \_\_\_\_\_'
3. St. Cyril of Alexandria was called "The \_\_\_\_\_ of Faith"
4. St. \_\_\_\_\_ the Great had a saintly family.
5. St John \_\_\_\_\_ is the Golden Mouth
6. The loss of \_\_\_\_\_ is the weightiest woe of hell. -- St John Chrysostom
8. St \_\_\_\_\_ wrote Pope Leo's motto-"In Illo uno unum," which means "In the One, we are one."
9. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote about the -----
11. St. John of Damascus is called a "\_\_\_\_\_ of the Church"



# MEANWHILE, BACK IN BYZANTIUM

by Kathryn Reetzke



12th century manuscript, Greek, of the return of St John's relics to Constantinople. Open access.

What does the return of St John Chrysostom's relics to the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Constantinople (438 AD) have to do with education in the Byzantine Empire? I'm sure you are familiar with St. John "the golden mouth," because we celebrate the Divine Liturgy he wrote on most Sundays of the year. He also wrote many homilies and spiritual teachings and was well known during his lifetime for his preaching and letters of encouragement to his friends and those who sought out his advice. St John is also venerated as one of the Holy Hierarchs celebrated with St. Basil and St. Gregory on January 30th. As a saint who was highly educated and skilled in speaking and writing, let's look at how children were educated in Byzantium.

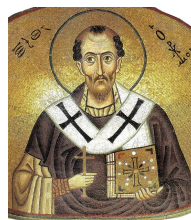
Education and learning in the Byzantine empire began in the home. Most children, boys and girls received basic lessons in math, reading, rhetoric (the art of public speaking), and some classical literature, as well as the Psalms. Private tutors were hired by wealthier families and children in more prominent homes went on to get higher education through their teen years. Families who could not afford tutors or lessons might apprentice their older children to a trade (possibly within the family or a godparent) and young women would work primarily in the home baking bread, spinning yarn and weaving fabric, serving the church by visiting the poor and also reading and memorizing biblical passages and studying spiritual works as well.

Some families would save money so oldest sons could attend college like classes with teachers. One school in Constantinople called the Pandidakterion was founded in 425 by Emperor Theodosius II to teach future government officials. 31 lecturers taught classes like Greek and Latin grammar, law, philosophy, rhetoric, all taught in either Greek or Latin.



12th century manuscript, Madrid Skylitzes 811-1057AD. Open access.

While this school was almost strictly secular, St. John and other contemporary saints continued to teach and preach using the skills based on rhetoric to write his loving homilies. St. Basil was educated both at home by his father Basil and his mother St. Emilia along with his older sister St. Macrina the Younger. He later learned under teachers in both Constantinople and Athens. He met St. Gregory The Theologian at lectures in Constantinople.



11th Century mosaic of St John. Open access.

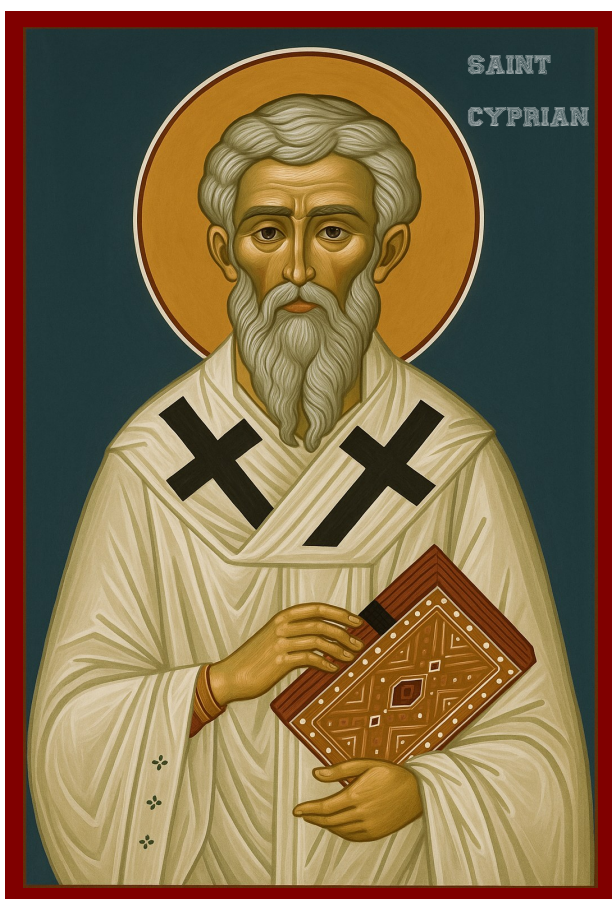
St. John attended the Catechetical School of Antioch. He wrote early homilies encouraging families to send their sons to monasteries (like the school he attended) to be educated as priests.

May the Holy Hierarchs watch over all students and teachers and guide us to learn how to serve God with our knowledge.

# Once Upon a SAINT

by Rebecca O'Loughlin

## St. Cyprian of Carthage, Early Church Father



My dearest children, in the early Church, in a part of Africa that is now Tunisia, a very wealthy pagan family had a son named Thasci (Thas-chee) whom they loved very much. They lavished the best education upon him, and since he was very smart, he learned a great deal.

Thasci became a famous speaker and lawyer. He was important and wealthy. Thasci went to circuses, enjoyed the best food money could buy, held fancy parties for his many friends, and ate way too much.

One of Thasci's friends was a Christian priest and scholar named Cecilius.

"I feel like I am wandering in a dark mist," Thasci told Fr. Cecilius one day. "I am lost. I have the best wines and food, and I am the most popular man in this city, but I hunger and thirst for something, I don't know what!"

"This is because you live for yourself," Fr. Cecilius replied. "Life will always seem pointless if it stops at yourself. You will one day die, and you will have spent your life serving a body that is headed for the grave."

"How should I live differently?" Thasci asked, "should I build a strong and beautiful aqueduct or theater for the people that will last forever?"

"Thasci! Even the aqueducts and theaters will one day break apart! No, if you want to know your purpose, if you want eternity, then you must turn your eyes toward the One who made you, who made the world, who put you in position to have wealth and riches and, yes, gave you an amazing intellect. The more you focus on God and serving others, the more you will become your true self, and the happier you will be."

"Tell me more about God," Thasci replied.

While learning about God, Thasci prayed. "Lord, I don't want to be a Christian half-way. I want to be completely changed, head to toe and from the inside out."

Thasci was probably in his forties when he entered the Church. He wanted to give everything of himself to God and live as the new man he had become in Christ. So he gave away everything he owned and took a vow of celibacy. He even gave away his name, becoming Cyprian.

Not long after, Cyprian was ordained a priest. If he was popular before, he was even more beloved now. People saw that Cyprian lived as he preached. Then the Patriarch of Carthage died. The people, priests, and bishops wanted Cyprian to be Patriarch in his place.



"Cyprian! You will be our Patriarch!"

"Me?! I've been a Christian for less than two years! I'm sorry, but no."

The people of Carthage dragged Cyprian to the Church where he finally accepted the Bishop's staff. The new patriarch Cyprian worked to help people have stronger faith to hold fast to God.

Then persecution came, under Emperor Decius.

Many abandoned the Church and sacrificed to idols. Cyprian went underground. A few of his bishops openly criticized Cyprian for hiding.

"Cyprian is setting a bad example," bishop Novatian complained. "He should be willing to face martyrdom."

However, Cyprian was loyal and continued to minister to his people even while in hiding. When the persecution was over, there was discussion over how to receive the people back into the Church who had sacrificed to idols. The discussion went something like this:

Bishop Novatus: "people who have sacrificed to idols out of fear should be immediately forgiven! St. Paul says some people are 'held in slavery by their fear of death' (Hebrews 2:15), and if such fear of death makes them slaves, then they have not chosen to sacrifice to idols freely."

Bishop Novatian: "The people who have sacrificed to idols have turned their backs on the Lord. There is no forgiveness for such behavior. They must not be allowed to call themselves Christians anymore."

Cyprian: "God is merciful, and wants to forgive us our sins, no matter what they are. However, for the good of the souls of those who have turned from God, let each repentant sinner present his own case. Just as the medicine should fit the illness, so too the penance fit the offense. After all, while it is bad to deny Christ to someone questioning you on the street, it is not nearly as bad as those who sacrificed an innocent human being to idols."

Novatian: "I refuse to listen to you! I will gather my own following..."

Not long after, Cyprian met with the African bishops and priests.

"The Bishop of Rome, Fabian has died. I have here the information that the new Roman Patriarch is named Cornelius."

But Cyprian was concerned. In his hands was a second letter that he had not read aloud to the assembly. Inside the letter were many accusations of anger against Cornelius!

"Please go to Rome and see what is wrong there." Cyprian told two of his bishops privately.

Then another message came.

"The new Patriarch of Rome is Novatian!"

Cyprian was confused and alarmed. This was the same Novatian who had not wanted forgiveness for former idolaters. And what had happened to Cornelius? Before long two of his own African bishops showed up.

"We were just in Rome," they said, "Patriarch Cornelius was validly elected. Novatian had only a few followers. He is falsely claiming to be the Bishop of Rome!"

Cyprian, filled with horror over Novatian's behavior, wrote a letter to Cornelius expressing his support. Cyprian also wrote a beautiful document on the importance of unity in the Church, and the need to stand with one's own bishop.

A plague broke out, and Cyprian organized a kind of field hospital that was open to everyone. But the pagans feared that the epidemic was caused by the wrath of the gods against the spread of Christianity.

Cyprian was sent into exile while awaiting trial. There he wrote many books and letters defending the Faith. A year later and it was time to meet emperor Valerian. The court was filled with Christians, priests and bishops, all who prayed for their patriarch.

The emperor called Cyprian forth. "Offer incense to the gods, and you may go free."

Cyprian shook his head. "I will not."

"Will you tell me the names of your priests and bishops?"

"No."

The emperor sighed. "I don't really want to kill you. Everyone loves you, Cyprian, but you know this means you must die?"

"Yes, I look forward to meeting the Emperor of Heaven and Earth."

"You will have your head cut off by a sword."

Cyprian raised his eyes to heaven. "Thanks be to God!"

The crowd teemed forward. "Us too! Let us die with our bishop!" They shouted.

The next day, patriarch Cyprian gave his blessing to everyone and reached into a bag on his belt pouch.

"Ah! Here we are!" Cyprian announced, handing a handful of gold coins to his executioner. "God bless you!"

Cyprian tied a cloth around his eyes, and knelt down and prayed. It was the 14th of September, 258.

The feast of the early Church Father, St. Cyprian of Carthage, is celebrated on September 31, September 16th, or September 26th, depending on what Church and location you are from.

# KNOW YOUR FAITH

By Lynne Wardach



The Value of Study and the

## EARLY FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

We all know from history classes that the best and most reliable information comes from primary sources. It follows, then, that those who lived with Christ, or who knew those who heard Him preach, would have the most accurate interpretation of His message.

The Early Church Fathers were those theologians, often priests, who lived during the first eight centuries of the church, referred to as the Patristic era. Patristic is derived from the Latin word "patres," meaning "fathers." These included those who had met the apostles or knew those who had met them, and so they had access to first- or second-hand accounts of Christ's life and teachings. They are known as the Apostolic Fathers. The Church confirms that the three first-century Bishops, known as the chief apostolic fathers, St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, and St. Polycarp of Smyrna, undoubtedly knew the apostles. St. Clement was ordained a bishop by St.

Peter, while Sts. Ignatius and Polycarp were followers of the Apostle and Evangelist, St. John.

Some theologians known as the Greek Fathers wrote in Greek. They include Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Peter of Sebaste, Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and St. John Chrysostom, the author of our Divine Liturgy! Along with Chrysostom, the Greek fathers Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzus are known as the Three Holy Hierarchs and celebrated together on January 30.

Sts. Ambrose, Jerome, Septemberine of Hippo, and Pope Gregory I were Fathers who wrote in Latin and were therefore known as the Latin Fathers. Other Latin Fathers included Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Hilary of Poitiers,



Pope Damascus I, Jerome of Stridonium, Popes Leo and Gregory the Great, and Isadore of Seville.

There were also Syriac Fathers, such as Ephrem the Syrian, Aphrahat, Isaac of Antioch, and Isaac of Nineveh.

The Council of Nicea, held in 325 AD, was a monumental point in Church history when the list of beliefs known as the Nicene Creed was developed. Its purpose was to express the Church's official position on many of the issues that the Church Fathers were defending. This point in time serves to classify the Church Fathers. Those fathers who lived during the First Council of Nicea, held in 325 AD, are called the Nicene Fathers. Those who lived before then were known as the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and those who lived afterward were called Post-Nicene Fathers.

All of the Fathers understood that it was important not only to hear the word of God but also to read it slowly, contemplate it, and discern how it should best be understood and applied to everyday life. They knew that by discerning the truths within the scriptures, they would be assured of walking in the proper direction and would become pleasing to God.

*Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*

The Fathers understood that understanding why these teachings were true was essential. They wanted to understand and then explain the reasons for orthodox beliefs and practices so that the doctrines of the faith might be preserved and protected from heresy, not just for their own sake but also for future generations.

*Psalm 1:1-3- How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

They knew that many in their day, even influential bishops, were interpreting the scriptures according to their own understanding, and many believers were being led astray, now believing in things that were not true. Once such a false idea was accepted, it would spread throughout entire eparchies and kingdoms, making it difficult to refute. Through the prophet Hosea, God tells us that once a tragedy like this happens, it can become a danger to souls.

*Hosea 4:6- My people are destroyed for lack of*

*knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being my priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

So these holy Fathers studied and wrote down their impressions of the teachings of scripture so that we might interpret them with wisdom, and not by our own, often uneducated or biased impressions. We all can use assistance to know precisely what is meant by what we read in scripture! An example is when the Apostle Philip, who Christ Himself taught, sees a man from Ethiopia reading the scriptures and offers to help him clarify what he is reading.

*Acts 8: 26-31 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.*

We are blessed to have the writings of these fathers to rely on when we have doubts or confusion about what we read in scripture. We can always look up their interpretations and discussions on any subject and be assured that these wise theologians have already done the hard work for us and can explain what we may not comprehend. You need not wait for adulthood to study their writings or attempt to read the holy scriptures. St. Paul tells the young disciple Timothy that you can begin to learn and build upon the knowledge of sacred things even in childhood!

*2 Timothy 3:14-15- You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that **from childhood** you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

Begin your study of sacred writings today! Keep a journal of your progress to build upon that knowledge so that you can walk confidently on the path to God.



Scan the QR code to see  
the links for the activities



## September Activities Calendar

This month is filled with so many fun and interesting things to do!  
Visit the Activities Index on the ByziKids page at ByziMom.com  
for all the links!

<https://www.byzimom.com/byzikids-magazine-extras>

### September 1

- ★ Happy New Liturgical Year! Make a list of spiritual resolutions
- ★ Get our New Years Resolution Worksheet
- ★ Commemorate Joshua's leadership and obedience today by making (and devouring) our
- ★ Sweet Wall of Jericho. Read about Sitting with St. Simeon Stylite and make a prayer tower of your own!



### September 2

- ★ Sharing Warm Milk with St. Mamas : (it's a yummy recipe) And try our St.Mamas Cheese-making Activity



### September 4

- ★ Commemoration of the Prophet Moses
- ★ Know Your Faith: Review the 10 Commandments
- ★ Get the Coloring Page
- ★ Learn the Old and New Commandments Song Lyrics



### September 5

- ★ Sts. Elizabeth & Zachariah Sticky Peanut Butter Treats (an even yummiier recipe!)



### September 7

- ★ Read about St. Sozon Silver Treasure Packets (an excellent recipe for dinner)



### September 8

- ★ Happy Birthday, Dear Theotokos!
- ★ Celebrate with a birthday cake after Divine Liturgy and by reading
- ★ The Birth Story of the Theotokos Maybe rehearse and perform the Nativity of the Theotokos Play, by Khouria Sylvia Dorham!



### September 11

- ★ Make our St. Euphrosynas the Cook Apple Crisp Recipe



### September 14

- ★ Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- ★ We have so many great activities, crafts, and recipes to share!



### September 17

- ★ St. Sophia & her Daughters, Faith, Hope, & Love
- ★ Make a batch of St. Sophia Breakfast Bread.



### September 19

- ★ St. Zosimas ; Try his Lion Cupcakes



### September 21

- ★ Feast of the Prophet Jonah
- ★ You can find a "whale" of information about him in our Know Your Faith article in the September 2022 issue from our Archives page!



### September 24

- ★ Read about St. Thecla, Equal to the Apostles, in the July 2025 issue!



### September 25

- ★ Revelation of the Trisagion Hymn +Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!



### September 26

- ★ Make a batch of Eagle Snacks to commemorate St. John the Theologian



### September 28

- ★ Synaxis of the Fathers of the Kyivan Caves
- ★ Make a cave of your own under your kitchen table! Our June 2025 issue, from the archives, has cave-themed activities and a great recipe for Cave Cookies!

