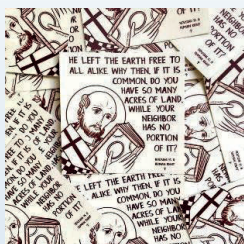


MEANWHILE, BACK IN BYZANTIUM

by Kathryn Reetzke



(by Art of Marza*)

St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407 AD) is best known for writing the Divine Liturgy that we celebrate each Sunday (except during Lent) and for being the Patriarch of Constantinople (397 AD). Did you know that he also wrote letters and encouragements to his godchildren and fellow Christians? You might remember his letters to St. Olympias from an earlier edition.

St. John also faced unfair persecution during his time as a church leader, including exile in 404 AD. However, this didn't prevent him from living a holy life, devoted to helping others. St. John also wrote sermons asking his listeners to help others, especially the poor. He also wrote a sermon especially on Fasting and Almsgiving, something along with prayer that we are about to do for 40 days this Nativity Fast!

St. John encourages us that all the things we have belong to God. "For even if you received them from your parents or your grandparents, they belong to God." As we approach the Nativity Fast on November 15th, think of ways you can give to others. If you don't have money, clothes, or toys to

donate, then do you have time? Can you bake cookies for an elderly neighbor or member of your parish? Perhaps you can help to clean your church or parish hall. Can you prepare a meal for your family or put away all the dishes, giving your parents more time to pray?

Let us take the words of St. John with us into the Nativity Fast:

"Almsgiving is thus the wing of prayer. If you do not provide your prayer with wings, it will never fly. When, however, your soul sprouts wings, it flies immediately to heaven. How long will the love of money and the desire for possessions last? All those things, brother, last no longer than the present life." St. John Chrysostom's Homily on *Fasting and Almsgiving*



A copy of "On Fasting and Almsgiving" from a Patriarchal Homiliary (Munich, Bavarian State Library, Cod.graec. 255)

*Marza is a dork and misfit who draws inspiration from iconography, the lives of the saints, graffiti, anime, and pop culture to bring God to unexpected places. Sticker by Artofmarza.com