

September 13, 2018

Feast of St. John Chrysostom

St John, today's Saint lived from 349-407 and was archbishop of Constantinople from 397 til his death in 407. St. John was a doctor of the Eastern Church and called a doctor of the Eucharist. Many of his homilies exist to the present day.

Within a century, an epithet was given him that has all but replaced his proper name. Acknowledging him as the greatest popular preacher of the East, it calls him "Chrysostom," meaning "golden-mouthed."

St John understood that to live knowing Jesus was a game changer. He taught, when life is governed by the values of heaven, the values of earth are turned upside down especially in relation to how we see other people.

Listen then to what he says about his fellows Christians.

You are my fellow citizens, my fathers, my brothers, my sons, my limbs, my body. You are my light, sweeter to me than the visible light. For what can the rays of the sun bestow on me that is comparable to your love? The sun's light is useful in my earthly life, but your love is fashioning a crown for me in the life to come.

St John had an unflinching trust in God and such love for his brothers and sisters in Christ.

In today's reading from 1 Corinthians we hear the Apostle also speak with the same passion. He says that in a world where people follow all sorts of gods, we know that there is but one God and we trust in him. In a place like Corinth where its citizens had a tendency to be puffed up with pride-filled knowledge, the congregation that bore this city's name were to be governed thought-filled love.

Paul's unflinching trust in God is expressed when he compares the worldly perspective on what he calls the "many gods", with the one true God.

Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.¹

Paul recognizes there are many spiritual influences in the world that shape and form people's lives – what in another place he calls principalities and powers – the realm of evil spirits. He then goes on to state clearly that there is only one God who is the author of all life and the one for whom we live. This is what is meant by "from whom are all things and for whom we exist" This

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (1 Co 8:5–6). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

is God the Father, of whom we say in the creed: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth” Paul then says of Jesus that he is the one Lord who animates all of life: “through whom are all things and through whom we exist”. In Colossians 1:17 St. Paul states the same idea this way:

He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.²

Jesus is the glue of the Universe.

I don't have time to unpack the social problem at play in Corinth that led to the weaker Christians scandalized by others in the community to eat meat sacrificed to idols other than to say that there was a lack of consideration – thus a lack of love - for those who found this practice problematic. The more knowledgeable ones thought this is no big deal, these gods don't even exist and so their knowledge was influencing their behavior. Paul corrects them and says “Knowledge puffs up but love builds up.” This is the principle at the heart of Christian ethics. When we come to know the one who is love we in turn love and discover and become ever more generous. This is what Jesus meant when he said:

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.³

In Jesus' day by folding one's cloak over the belt, a pouch could be formed to carry grain from the marketplace. When grain was shaken and running over, the buyer was guaranteed a full and honest amount. The illustration shows how God's generosity overflows on our behalf.

The application is that when we discover the true character of God – His Generosity, we will in turn become increasingly generous as we overflow with the love that builds up. We then are realizing with the “golden-mouthed” preacher:

The sun's light is useful in my earthly life, but your love is fashioning a crown for me in the life to come.

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Col 1:17). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Lk 6:38). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.