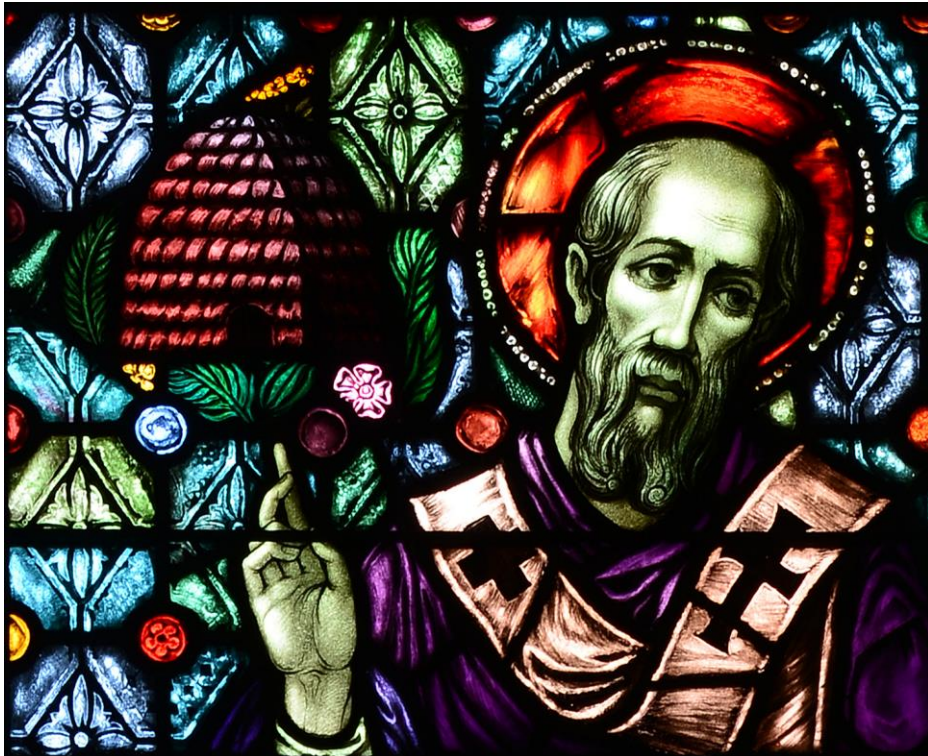


JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 349-409

John Chrysostom was patriarch of Constantinople and is honored as one of the four Eastern Doctors of the Church (with Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius, and Basil the Great). He was born in Antioch, the capital of ancient Syria, one of the great cities of the classical world and a continuing center of culture during the Middle Ages. It was also a center of religious controversy, with competing classical and Christian philosophies. Chrysostom's early education appears to have been determined by his mother, Anthusa, who was widowed shortly after his birth but who arranged for him to study rhetoric and philosophy under the city's most distinguished teachers. He pays tribute to her in his classic treatise, *On the Priesthood*. At eighteen he began to study biblical exegesis as practiced by the monastic schools and was then baptized. For several years he lived the life of a hermit but became physically weakened by the rigors of the life. Returning then to Antioch, he entered clerical ranks, was ordained a priest and preached for twelve years. In 398 the Emperor Arcadius selected John as the Patriarch of Constantinople. For the last eleven years of his life he was involved with the political issues of church reform and secular challenges, alienating many of the older clergy and ultimately the emperor. He was deposed and died at the age of sixty, after three years in exile.

The text of the *Golden Legend* begins with the standard explanation of Chrysostom's name, which in Greek means "golden mouthed," a reference to his great power in preaching. In contrast to many of the lives in the collection, the text deals almost exclusively with the historical account of Chrysostom's struggles administering the see of Constantinople. The story sketches of a man personally abstemious, but fervent, even rash in his pursuit of his goals, and consequently "maligned on all sides." His zeal in his stewardship is emphasized, especially the struggle between Chrysostom and the Byzantine emperor over the ownership of church property. Chrysostom refused to permit the Goths to have use of a church despite the emperor's insistence. The Goths were adherents to Arian heresy that denied that Christ was divine or that the divinity could be conceived of as a Trinity of persons. Thus, like many of the saints in the chapel's program, he is represented as one struggling for moral rectitude and doctrinal correctness. His writings are vast and comprehensive, but he was most admired by the later Church for his commentaries on Sacred Scripture, especially those concerning the moral teaching of the Gospels.

He stands wearing a purple chasuble over green and gold robes. A stole embellished with crosses in the Greek tradition is draped over his shoulders. He holds a scroll in his left hand that refers to his Homily 49 on Matthew: Christ's miracle of the loaves and fishes is performed only once, to teach the people not "to be slaves to their belly, but to cling incessantly to the things of the Spirit." The Greek inscription reads: ΕΧΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΩΝ ΥΠΕΡΟΠΑ ΤΩΝ ΒΙΩΤΙΚΩΝ (Cling to the things of the spirit; disregard the things of ordinary life). A yellow beehive, the symbol of his eloquence, and "honey sweet words" appears to the left of his head. In the narrative scene Chrysostom preaching to four men as he points to a man kneeling before lighted candles within a niche. The complex carving of the columns and the dome in the distance suggest Early Christian architectural forms, notably those of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) built by the Emperor Justinian 537-553.



In the borders are crossed scrolls symbolizing his writings, and the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, symbols of the infinity of God derived from Revelations 1:8: "I am the Alpha and Omega, says the Lord God, the one who is, and was, and is to come." This and the Chi Rho are symbols of the Trinity that Chrysostom defended against Arian doubts.

The Chrysostom window would remind 1920s Jesuits of that part of their own education known as the Jesuit Juniorate (two years of study emphasizing Latin and Greek after first vows). The seminarian most proficient in the language would preach a sermon in Greek during dinner in the refectory on the feast of Saint John Chrysostom.