

## Weekly Musings ✝ January 24, 2011

*Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.*

If you ever say the daily office (Morning Prayer) or remember it from the days when the Eucharist was not the norm in church, you probably remember the splendid prayer above. Its author is St. John Chrysostom who died around 407. His feast day is this Thursday.



Chrysostom means “golden mouth.” Remember, last names (surnames) were well over a thousand years down the road. Chrysostom was trained as a lawyer in Antioch and by one of the most famous orators of the time. He wished to be a monastic or more specifically a hermit, early on. The solitary monastic was quite common in the Eastern (Orthodox) Church, the church of Asia Minor, Constantinople and environs, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Chrysostom was quite capable. He eventually became the Patriarch of Constantinople. The eastern part of Christendom was not ruled by a Pope as the west was, but by Patriarchs. There was one in Constantinople, Antioch (Syria), Alexandria (Egypt) and Jerusalem.



Chrysostom was very popular with the common people. He was not popular with the aristocracy and especially not with the empress, Eudoxia (Eudocia). Unlike some of his predecessors in the role of Patriarch, Chrysostom was not given to lavish parties or corruption. He remained at heart a monastic.

The empress was a woman of some piety but Chrysostom openly criticized her. Eventually she banished him and when he didn't die soon enough, he was marched in severe weather to another location and died en route. It is true that Chrysostom was not always diplomatic but he did nothing deserving of this vain woman's vengeance.

*John Chrysostom and Aelia Eudoxia, by John-Paul Laurens, 1880s*

Chrysostom reminds us how difficult it is to finally reconcile a life of wealth and ease with the Gospel. I remember arguing with someone who said it wasn't whether or not you had money but how you used it. However, this notion that intentionality counts for everything is anything but Biblical. I reminded him of the parable of Lazarus and Dives, the poor man who begged outside the rich man's gate. Lazarus ends up in the “Bosom of Abraham” but Dives in hell. Dives asks, among other things, for Lazarus to bring him water. The point of the story is quite clear when Abraham says:

*“Son, remember that you, in your lifetime, received your good things, and Lazarus, in the same way, bad things. But now here he is comforted and you are in anguish.” —Luke 16*

An interesting side note is that the relics (bones) of Chrysostom along with another famous eastern archbishop (Gregory of Nazianzus) were returned by Rome to the Patriarch of Constantinople, now called the Ecumenical Patriarch, in 2004.

*Relics on left and the Patriarch and Pope (John Paul II) at the Vatican*



I must say one of the things I have always distrusted about what I call Big Box Christianity, that is the new kind that pops up here and there with new churches, is the tendency to merge the requirements of society, prosperity and family with the Gospel as though they were always a seamless web. Real Christianity, and indeed one might say, real love, always requires choices and in fact, we should learn some time in late adolescence that 'you can't always have your cake and eat it, too' (strangely, not in scripture).

### **St. Luke's News**

Remember that the Youth Group now includes kids down to the fifth grade. We meet Wednesday at 6 pm for dinner and are out by 8 pm.

Child care is always available during the 10 am service. Godly Play for children starts shortly after 9 am on Sundays excluding the first Sunday.

The vestry has decided to have an ongoing potluck and Bible study on Tuesday nights from about 6 pm to no later than 7:30 pm. This will be the time we do our Lenten program as well. Details are to follow.

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