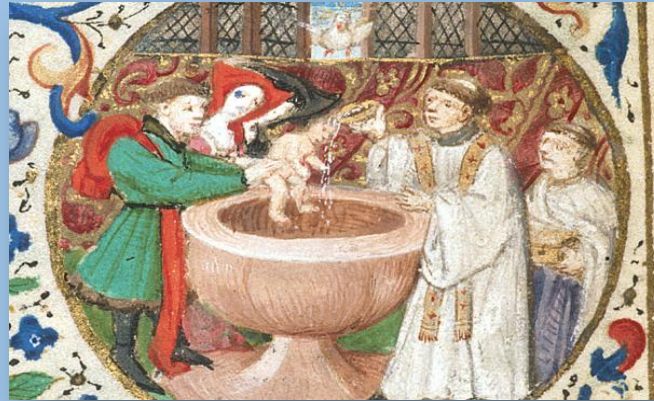


## *The Children in Byzantine Years*

Bringing up a child during his early years was the duty of its mother or, in richer families, of a nurse. The birth of a boy was a very happy event with celebrations. The arrival of a girl, on the other hand, passed unnoticed.

Once a newborn baby had been bathed by the midwife, it was wrapped in clothes, a practice that was maintained for the first two or three months of its life. Within a week of their birth new-born children were baptized, the name of their father being added, in the genitive case, to their given name.



Babies were put to sleep in cradles. They took their first steps under the watchful eye of their mother, who would later teach them their first letters. Their amusements were a rattle and a basket full of toys. When they were a little older, boys were given a whistle, clay wagons and a leather -- often multicolored -- ball, knuckle-bones, and a hoop.

Girls played with dolls and puppets. A favorite game of theirs was to enact important events such as a wedding or baptism. Also, they built mud houses, as Eustachio's of Thessaloniki relates.



When they reached six years of age, boys went to a teacher to learn reading and writing from the Book of Psalms, and arithmetic by counting on their fingers. They wrote their first letters on a tablet covered with wax. Girls attended lessons with their brothers only if they were held at home by private tutors. Even so, there were quite a few women with a broad education, such as Kassiane and Anna Comnene.

*1<sup>ο</sup> Γυμνάσιο Λαυρίου*



Religious instruction and singing completed a basic education which lasted three years. From the age of 10 upwards, only the most able and the sons of the richest families continued their studies. They learnt rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, geometry, music and astronomy in the schools. There were also church schools in which theology was taught, in addition to the other subjects.