

The Nicene Fathers

What do we remember from the previous classes?

- Focus on Apostolic succession
- Suffering/martyrdom
- Christian Identity
 - Lens of Christ to view Jewish/Greek thought
 - Developing a defined structure for unity
 - Heresies, heresies and more heresies

4th. c. Christianity

- Worst persecution – Diocletian
- End of persecution (kind of) – conversion of Constantine
- Confronting Heresies – especially Arianism
 - Council of Nicea I
 - Council of Constantinople I

Week Four

St. Agnes of Rome

St. Athanasius

Desert Fathers

St. Ambrose

St. Agnes of Rome

- Daughter of nobility who vowed herself to Christ, refusing marriage
- Legend says a suitor turned her in to authorities – sentenced to a brothel
- Spared in the brothel, tortured and killed in 304 at the age of 12/13



St. Agnes of Rome

One of the most documented of the early martyrs

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She became a Christian heroine almost immediately after her death.

- A model of all Christian martyrs
- Appalled Romans who recognized her virtue and courage
- Constantine's daughter built St. Agnes Outside the Walls – still stands

Question

What is a superior vocation?

St. Athanasius

Schooled in Alexandria, faithful secretary to his bishop (Alexander)

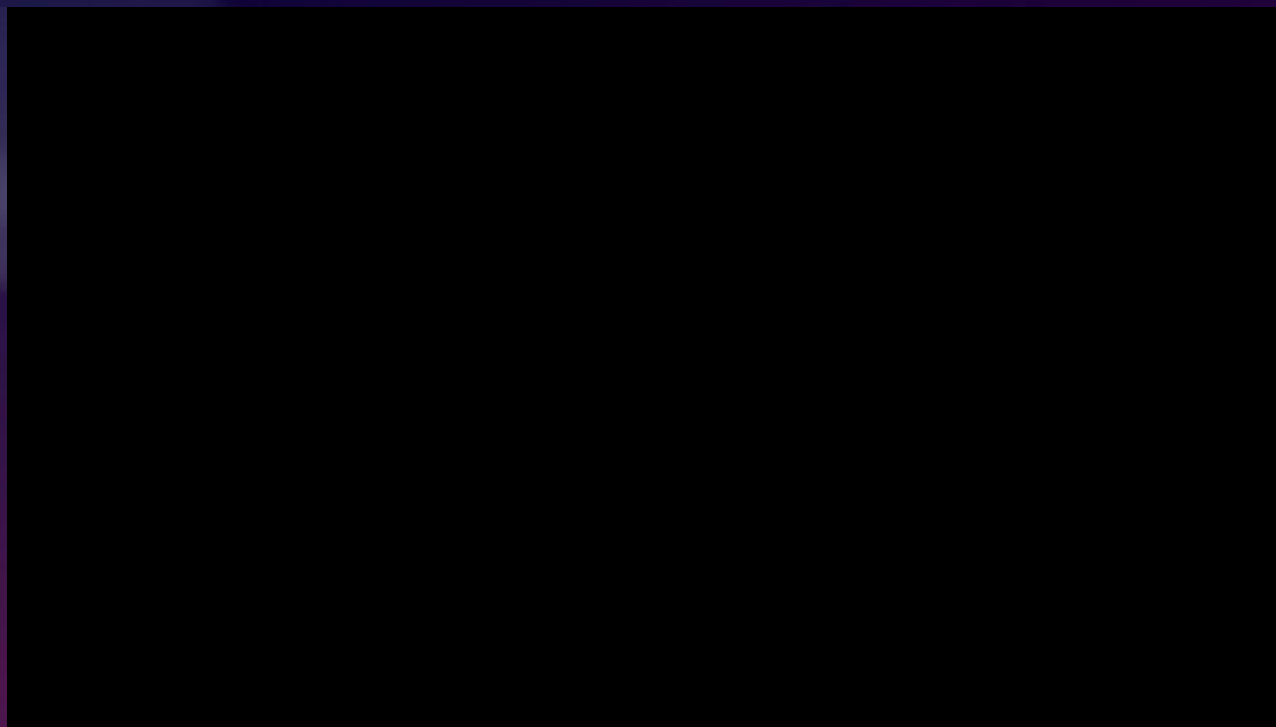
Named a Doctor of the Church in the 1500s

Archenemy/Nemesis: Arius

“But the leper was not one of this sort, for he worshipped God in the Body...he worshipped the Creator of the universe as dwelling in a created temple, and was cleansed.”

~To Adelphius

Council of Nicea



“Councils often represent the *beginning* of a resolution to a particular crisis in the Church.” – Scott Hahn, *The Creed*

Arianism/Council of Nicea I

Arianism taught that Jesus was not God – he was created and gifted with divinity.

- Selective reading of Scripture, out of context
- Ignored the prayer and worship of the Church since the time of the Apostles

Emperor Constantine called a council to settle the matter, which only partially worked.

Arianism continued to spread after the Council

“Athanasius against the world”

- Bishops and Roman nobility increasingly sided with Arius
- Exiled five times by four Roman emperors, spending 17 of the 45 years he served as bishop of Alexandria in exile, targeted by assassins
- Escaped to live with the Desert Fathers
- Wrote a ‘bestseller’ – the Life of St. Anthony of Egypt, which triggered a wave of monastic vocations

Questions

What is the greatest mystery in our Faith?

How do we understand the Incarnation?

How do we understand the Trinity?

St. Ambrose

- One of the OG Four Doctors of the Church
- Came from a Christian family, born into power
- Appointed Governor of his province
- In an attempt to make a case for a good bishop, he got himself elected (time to get baptized!)
- Gave up his wealth and position, studied theology with the same vigor as law

St. Ambrose

Threw himself into his role, navigating influential circles with boldness

- Denied the emperor the sacraments after a massacre
- Theodosius died in Ambrose's arms
- Called for sit-in by the laity when the emperor tried to give control of several churches to his mother (an Arian)
- Instructed the emperor to squash resurging paganism

St. Ambrose

- Proposed a view of Church/State relations differing from the East
 - “do I think that I can entrust to others what God has given me?”
- Skilled in rhetoric, St. Augustine came to listen to him because he was so famous
- Taught catechumens as well as priests
- Introduced singing in liturgy, composing for the laity to join in

Desert Fathers

How do you overcome human limitations - Such as Anger?

- why should I hate those who hate me?
- Compassion can surprise people to conversion

Discipline of the body – training the soul and mind, fighting Acedia (boredom, ennui)

Asceticism, not Gnosticism

Desert Fathers

They were seeking holiness

- through changing from within
- Through silence, learning the hidden life
- Through the spiritual battle
 - prayer, scripture and meditation

Perseverance and faithfulness to the cause

God above all things, for love of neighbor

Society is changing...

How do you live a Christian life in the public square?

How did Church/State relations develop? East and West started taking diverging paths

Questions?

Next Week..

St. Gregory of Nazianzus

St. Basil the Great

St. Gregory of Nyssa

St. Macrina