

Ante-Nicene Fathers

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, our Savior, let us now come to you: Our hearts are cold; Lord, warm them with your selfless love. Our hearts are sinful; cleanse them with your precious blood. Our hearts are weak; strengthen them with your joyous Spirit. Our hearts are empty; fill them with your divine presence. Lord Jesus, our hearts are yours; possess them always and only for yourself.

(Prayer of Augustine, 354-430)

4th. c.

- Conversion of Constantine, Church/state relationships were changing
- Heresies, division and the first major councils
- Councils of Nicea and Constantinople helped define Trinity, Christology, Holy Spirit
- Rise of desert monasticism
- How to live a Christian life

5th. c.

- Roman empire began to crumble
- Division began to be more visible in the East/West churches
- New heresies springing up, reactions to new challenges inspire great works of writing and preaching

Week Six

St. Monica
St. Augustine
St. John Chrysostom
St. Marcella
St. Jerome

Doctors of the Church

JOAN WATSON

PRESENTS

DOCTORS OF THE
CHURCH

St. Monica

2nd most famous mother in Christian history

Born into a Christian family, but married to a pagan – there was only so much she could do to educate her children in the faith.

Broken-hearted when Augustine turned to Manichaeism – St. Ambrose instructed her to “Just leave him alone for a while...”

Her own life transformed
as she prayed for her son

St. Monica

She was a model of piety and prayer for Augustine

- Stung his conscience in his sinfulness
- A model back to orthodoxy
- He found profound union with God through conversation with her

She was devoted to the Mass as highest form of prayer

“Set this body down anywhere... I only ask this: remember me at the Lord’s altar, wherever you are.”

St. Augustine

Writings mentioned in the Catechism more than any others (other than the Bible) – Possibly the greatest of the Church Fathers

Famously naughty

Famous for writing about:

- Grace is necessary for salvation
- Faith and reason
- Sacraments do not rely on the holiness of the minister
- Governance of the Church
- The closeness of God to man

Used philosophy to serve theology

Life was completely transformed ...eventually

St. Augustine

Understanding his works: Three thematic points

The Fall of Man: Man was created by all knowing God, in goodness. According to St. Augustine the fall was man's free choice made with misuse of intellect and will, the acts resulting were evil, not having God, but the will itself for their end (The City of God Bk 14)

The Root of Sin: Sin comes from the heart. City of God 13, He devotes the entire chapter on this subject. He states that pride was truly the beginning of Adam and Eve's sin and that their evil actions were a result of their self-exaltation

Hope of Redemption: This is offered as a result of the Fall. "The will being lost by its own fault, can only be restored by Him who was able at first to give it... for He is our liberator, inasmuch as He is our Savior" City of God 11.1

Discussion

“Our hearts are restless
until they rest in You”

– How does this resonate in your life?

St. John Chrysostom

John of Antioch, “The Golden Tongued”

Hundreds of homilies have been preserved

How can Scripture influence every day life?

- Marriage
- Sports
- Cooking
- Materialism
- Vanity
- Wealth
- Parenting
- Love
- Discipline

St. John Chrysostom

Studied law and rhetoric, but fled to the desert

Ill health lead him back, appointed to the patriarch of Constantinople

Emperor sent armed guards to make sure he showed up

Homilies were targeted (unpopular with the wealthy, naughty priests, elite, emperor) so he was exiled. Twice.

Died en route to his third exile.

St. John Chrysostom – on marriage

“You have seen the amount of obedience necessary; now hear about the amount of love necessary. Do you want your wife to be obedient to you, as the Church is to Christ? Then be responsible for the same providential care of her, as Christ is for the Church. And even if it becomes necessary for you to give your life for her, yes, and even to endure and undergo suffering of any kind, do not refuse. . . Suffer anything for her sake, but never disgrace her, for Christ never did this with the Church.”

“The two have become one. This is not an empty symbol. They have not become the image of anything on earth, but of God Himself.”

“Camels and mules behave more decently than some people at wedding receptions!”

“When your daughter is to be married, don’t look for how much money a man has. Don’t worry about his nationality or his family’s social position. All these things are superfluous. Look instead for piety, gentleness, wisdom, and the fear of the Lord, if you want your daughter to be happy.”

“The Holy Scriptures were not given to us that we should enclose them in books, but that we should engrave them upon our hearts.”

St. Marcella

Born into a noble Roman family and widowed after only 7 months – devoted her life to poverty, prayer and mortification

One of St. Jerome's closest friends; She learned of monasticism from Athanasius

Very clever with an insatiable curiosity, she took to Jerome her most difficult questions

“So when I left Rome, when a dispute come up about the testimony of Scripture on any subject, people went to her to settle it.” ~ Jerome's letter to Principia

When the Goths invaded Rome, they broke into her home demanding gold. They scourged and beat her – she died a few days later.

St. Jerome

Not your typical saint – Crabby, argumentative, passionate

Like all the others – went to the desert.

Studied under St. Gregory of Nazianzus, then to Rome – served as the Pope’s secretary. Fled to the east, Egypt after the Pope’s death. Settled and died in Bethlehem.

Didn’t seem to get along with men for very long, had lifetime friendships with women, started monasteries.

Most famous for his translation of the Scriptures into Latin, commentaries-

St. Jerome

“What Jerome is ignorant of, no mortal has ever known.”
~Augustine

Great love for Scripture.

“...ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”

Some Key ideas –

- Perpetual Virginity of Mary
 - Monastic life
 - Holiness and Sin
 - Poverty

Discussion

Do you read the Bible every day?

If so - How does this impact your prayer life?

If not – What do you see as obstacles to praying with the Bible every day?

Things to think about...

Role of Scripture in our lives

Role of preaching in our spiritual community

Role of women, especially widows, in the Church

Questions?

St. Leo the Great
St. Peter Chrysologus
St. Vincent of Lerins
St. Cyril of Alexandria
St. Olympias