

**IF I HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT EARTHLY THINGS AND YOU DO NOT BELIEVE, HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE IF I TELL YOU ABOUT HEAVENLY** in the Rhineland.

On the death of Emperor Constantine I, Athanasius was allowed to return to Alexandria. Shortly thereafter, ... Constantine's son, the new [Eastern] Roman Emperor Constantius II, renewed the order for Athanasius's banishment in 338. Athanasius went to Rome, where he was under the protection of Constans, the Emperor of the West. During this time, Gregory of Cappadocia was installed as the Patriarch of Alexandria, usurping the absent Athanasius. Pope Julius I wrote to the supporters of Arius strongly urging the reinstatement of Athanasius, but that effort proved to be in vain. Julius called a synod in Rome in the year 341 to address the matter, and at that meeting Athanasius was found to be innocent of all the charges raised against him. After the usurping Archbishop, Gregory, died in 346, Constans used his influence to allow Athanasius to return to Alexandria. When Constans died in 350, a civil war broke out which left Constantius as sole emperor. Constantius, renewing his previous policies favoring the Arians, banished Athanasius from Alexandria once again.

Athanasius died in 373. In 381, the Church's second great Ecumenical meeting, the Council of Constantinople, restated Athanasius' (and Holy Scripture's) traditional teaching of the Holy Trinity that the Church has upheld ever since.

### **Trinity Sunday Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you. **AMEN.**

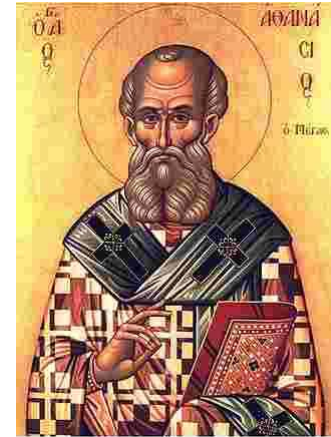
The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. **AMEN.**

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. **AMEN.**

The Lord God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the holy and undivided Trinity, guard you, save you, and bring you to that heavenly City, where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

**For next Sunday please prepare Saint Mark 3:20-35**

## **FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - TRINITY SUNDAY**



### **Saint Athanasius c. 293 - 373**

**Orthodox Icon      Date and artist unknown**

### **Today's Gospel: John 3:1-16** [Year B, Trinity Sunday]

✠ NOW THERE WAS A PHARISEE NAMED NICODEMUS, A LEADER OF THE Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Verytruly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from

**IF I HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT EARTHLY THINGS AND YOU DO NOT BELIEVE, HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE IF I TELL YOU ABOUT HEAVENLY** heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. [© NRSV]

### **Worship Notes: *Eucharistic Prayer "D"***

St. Basil the Great of Caesarea (*ob.* 379) was the author of the intricate Eucharistic Prayer "D", found on page 372 in the Prayer Book. It is used in the Orthodox, Episcopal and Anglican Churches, as well as in the Roman Catholic and several others. It's perhaps the oldest such prayer still used in its virtually original form. The prayer is set to a complex chant tone in the Æolian Mode which comes from the ancient Spanish Liturgy, a regional variant called the *Mozarabic* or the *Liturgy of Saint Isidore of Seville*. The Mozarabic is dated from about the 5th century. It survives in a few specially chartered chapels in Seville parishes and recently was translated into Spanish and recommended for wider use.

Note that this and most all Eucharistic Prayers take a Trinitarian form, with the first paragraphs addressing The Father, then portions focusing on The Son and then, paragraphs stressing The Holy Spirit. The prayer concludes with petitions, intercessions and a remembrance of the Blessed in Christ.

### **The Man who Preserved our Faith**

In the 4th century we nearly voted away our Biblical faith in the Holy Trinity. The Church was under pressure from the Roman government to reject the "Faith once delivered to the saints" and replace it with the banal teachings of the heretical Theologian, Arius, who had gutted the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. He claimed that Jesus was subordinate to the Father. The man who almost single handedly preserved our Trinitarian beliefs was Saint Athanasius. We can only mention a few things about him here. You'll find a good short biography on the Internet's free encyclopedia, Wikipedia. Below are several excerpts from that article:

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Athanasius received his philosophical and theological training at Alexandria. He was ordained as a deacon by the Patriarch, Alexander of Alexandria, in 319. In 325 he served as Alexander's secretary at the First Council of Nicaea. Already a recognized theologian and ascetic, he was the obvious choice to replace Alexander as the Patriarch of Alexandria on the latter's death in 328, despite the opposition of the followers of Arius...

The Church's First Ecumenical Council was called by Emperor Constantine I. It was held at Nicaea in 325. Though not yet a Christian himself, Constantine wanted Christians to agree on their teaching about God. Arius proposed a belief that subordinated the Divine nature of Christ while traditional, Biblical Christianity believed in One God of Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Bishops came to Nicaea from all over the world; Constantine himself presided over the council held in what was then a major city.<sup>2</sup> At Nicaea the Bishops agreed on the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. They designated an already extant statement of belief as the official statement of our Faith. It was virtually the same *Nicene Creed*, that we say each Sunday in the Eucharist; only a few words have been amplified. Athanasius became Archbishop of Alexandria in 328, but the Arians continued their attacks.

Bishop Athanasius spent the first years of his patriarchate visiting the churches with people of his territory, which at that time included all of Egypt and Libya. During this period, he established contacts with the hermits and monks of the desert... which would be very valuable to him over the years. Shortly thereafter, St. Athanasius became occupied with the disputes with the Byzantine Empire and Arians which would occupy much of his life.

Athanasius soon found himself in the midst of Theological battles which several times deposed him from his office. He also had recurring problems with the Roman government; for example in 335 Athanasius' lying opponents convinced Rome, *with no evidence (!)*, that Athanasius was trying to stop the shipping of wheat from Egypt, then part of Rome's bread basket. Constantine expelled him to Trier

<sup>1</sup> E.g: Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

<sup>2</sup> Nicaea was an important city in the days of the Eastern Roman Empire. It survives under a different name, Iznik, a Turkish town of 15,000, still graced by extensive Roman ruins. Most of its Christian structures were torn down by the Ottoman Turks when they conquered Nicaea in 1329.