

# Wisdom of the Ages

Teachings of the Church Fathers that Guide Us Now

# Who are the Church Fathers?



Why do we use the term “Fathers”?

What criteria do we use to determine who is a Church Father?

- Orthodoxy of Doctrine
- Holiness of Life
- Ecclesiastical Approval



# THE MIND (PHRONEMA) OF THE FATHERS. THE CONSENSUS OF THE FATHERS

Ecumenicity of faith and doctrine in  
space and time:

Vincent of Lerins: “*teneamus quod  
ubique, quod semper, quod ab  
omnibus creditum est*”

“We must hold what has been believed  
everywhere, always and by all”  
The Rule of Faith

“IF SOME NEW QUESTION SHOULD ARISE ON WHICH NO SUCH DECISION HAS BEEN GIVEN, THEY SHOULD THEN HAVE RECOURSE TO THE OPINIONS OF THE HOLY FATHERS, OF THOSE, AT LEAST, WHO, EACH IN HIS OWN TIME AND PLACE, REMAINING IN UNITY OF COMMUNION AND THE FAITH, WERE ACCEPTED AS APPROVED MASTERS; AND WHATSOEVER THESE MAY BE FOUND TO HAVE HELD, WITH ONE MIND AN ONE CONSENT, THIS OUGHT TO BE ACCOUNTED THE TRUE AND CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH, WITHOUT ANY DOUBT OR SCRUPLE.” (VINCENT OF LERINS, *COMMONITORIUM* CH. 41)

# What about Church Mothers?



# Why and How do we Read the Fathers?

1. These writings give expression (theological definition) to the experience and truths of the Faith. As such, they guard against error and untruth.
2. Immersed in Scripture, the Fathers “speak” Scripture and God’s revelation to us in ways we can understand. They make accessible to us in each age the timeless truths of the Faith. They are “ambassadors of the word of God either by speech or pen.” (Eusebius)
3. We should see the Church Fathers as our holy friends- support in times of doubt and difficulty, guides in times of confusion, and companions who keep us safe and inspire us.
4. We must comprehend their writings knowing the purpose and structure of the text, the context of their time and history, and the fullness of their teaching and thought (that is, what else they have written and done).
5. Christ alone is perfect; no one Church Father is without some element of “falling short” or error. We keep as Church teaching what belongs to the consensus of the Fathers, and do not regard as doctrine every patristic statement.

# Types of Church Fathers

APOSTOLIC FATHERS

APOLOGISTS

ANTI-HERETICAL FATHERS

DOCTRINAL CHURCH FATHERS

BYZANTINE CHURCH FATHERS

DESERT FATHERS

ASCETIC FATHERS



# Apostolic Fathers

Didache

I and II Clement

Ignatius of Antioch

(Letters)

Polycarp of Smyrna

(Epistle, Martyrdom)

Epistle of Barnabas

Shepherd of Hermas

Epistle to Diognetus



Saint Clement

Saint Ignatius

Saint Polycarp

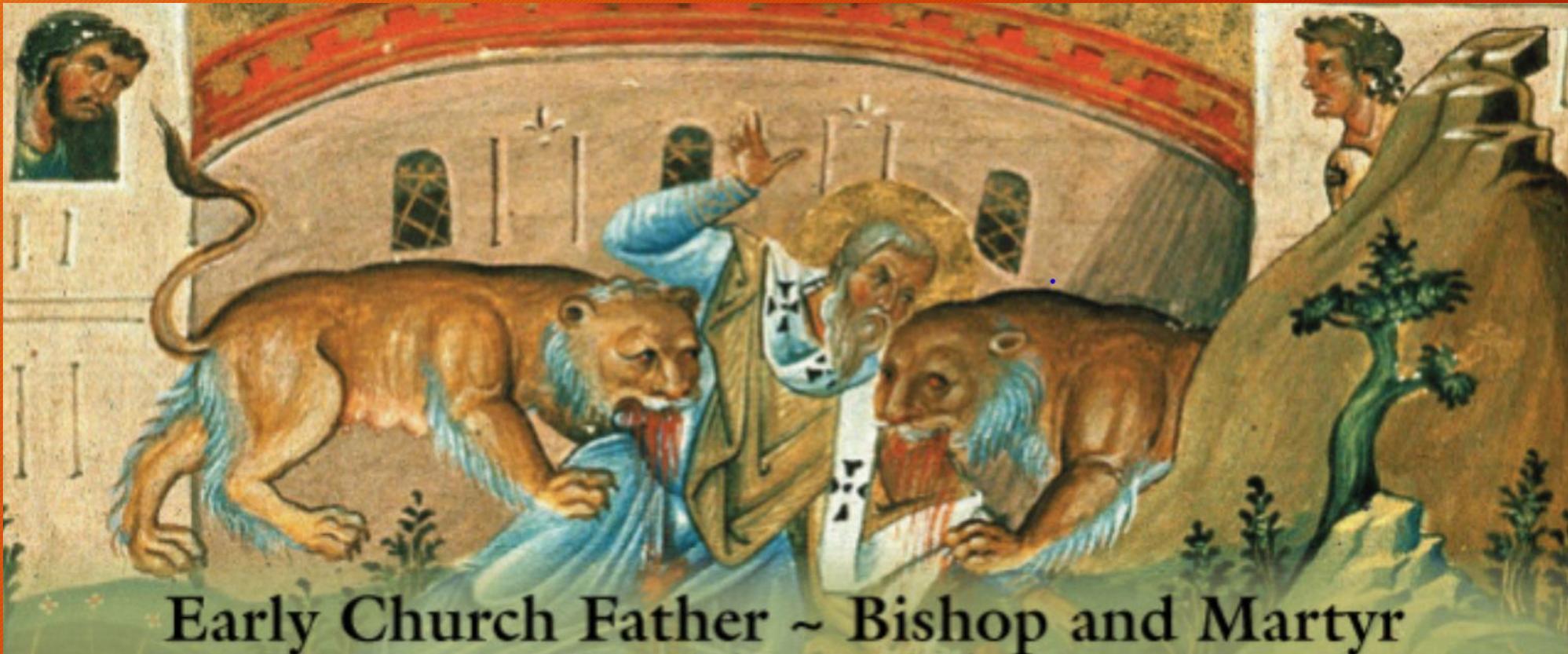
# \*Didache\* The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations

How to live/ behave as a Christian: “There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but a great difference between the two ways.”

How to worship as a Christian: “But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned.”

How to structure Christian leadership: Appoint, therefore, for yourselves, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers.

# St. Ignatius of Antioch 105/110



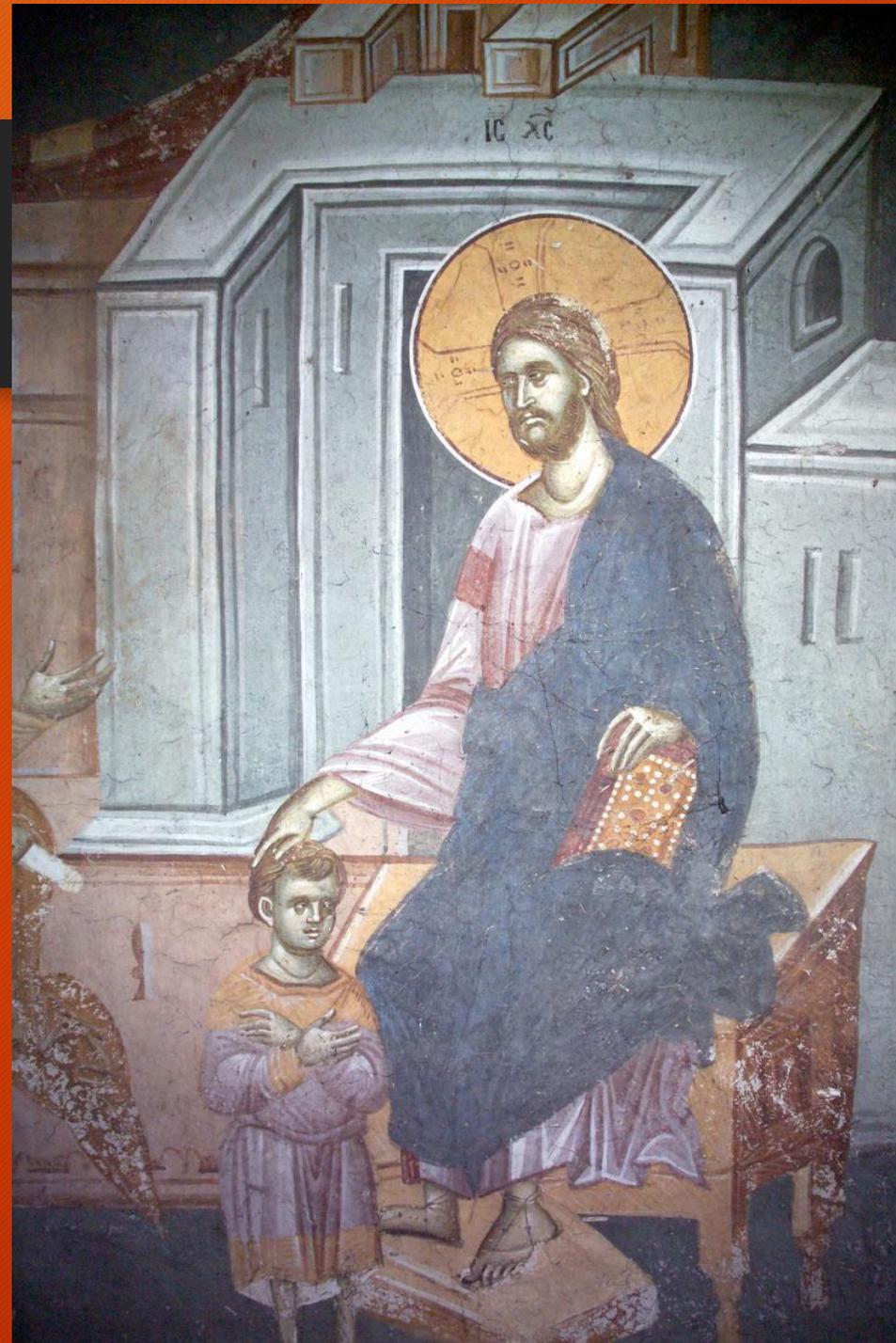
**\* \* Ignatius \* \* \***  
**Theophoros \* \***

**As a child: held by Jesus**

**As a young man: disciple  
to St. John the Evangelist**

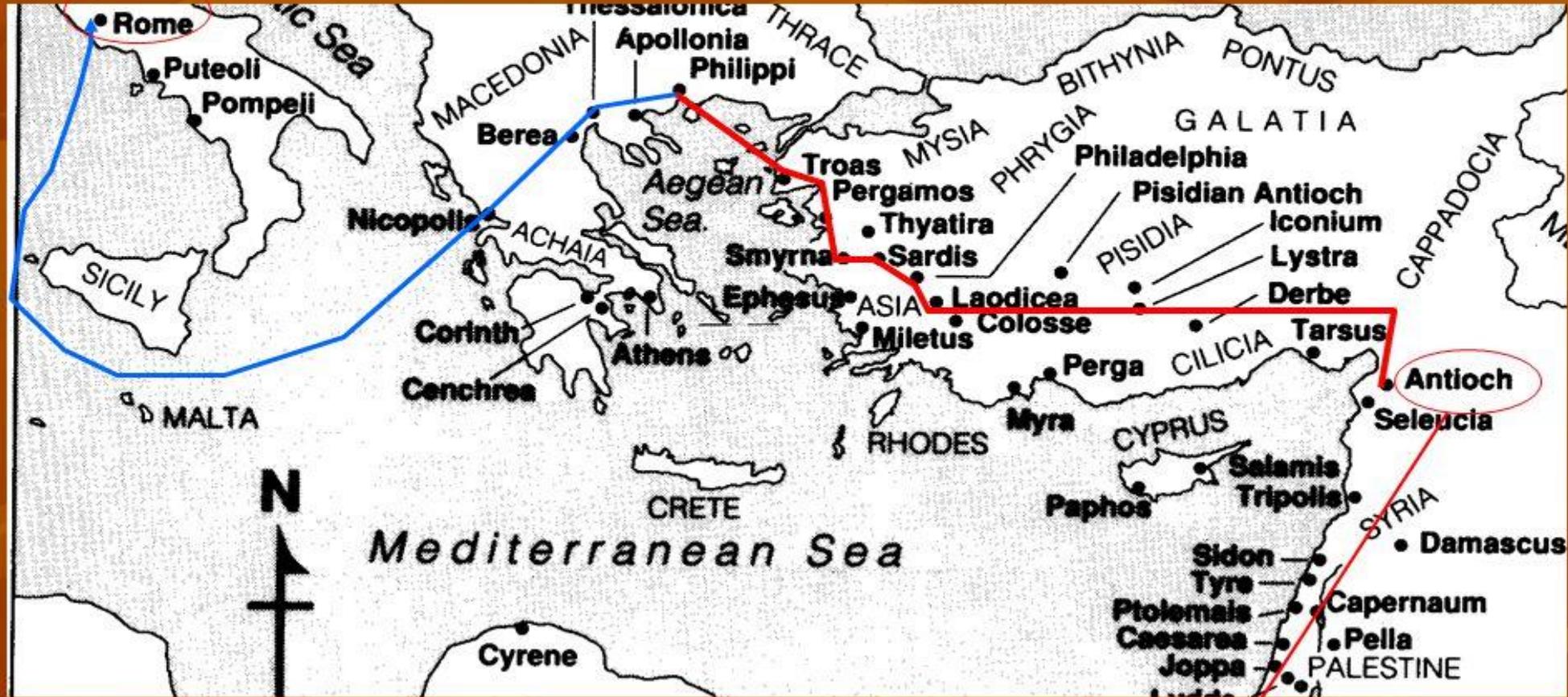
**As an adult: second  
Bishop of Antioch**

**BISHOP \* MARTYR \* DISCIPLE  
CHRISTIAN \* "HUMAN"**



# Ignatius – Trip to Rome

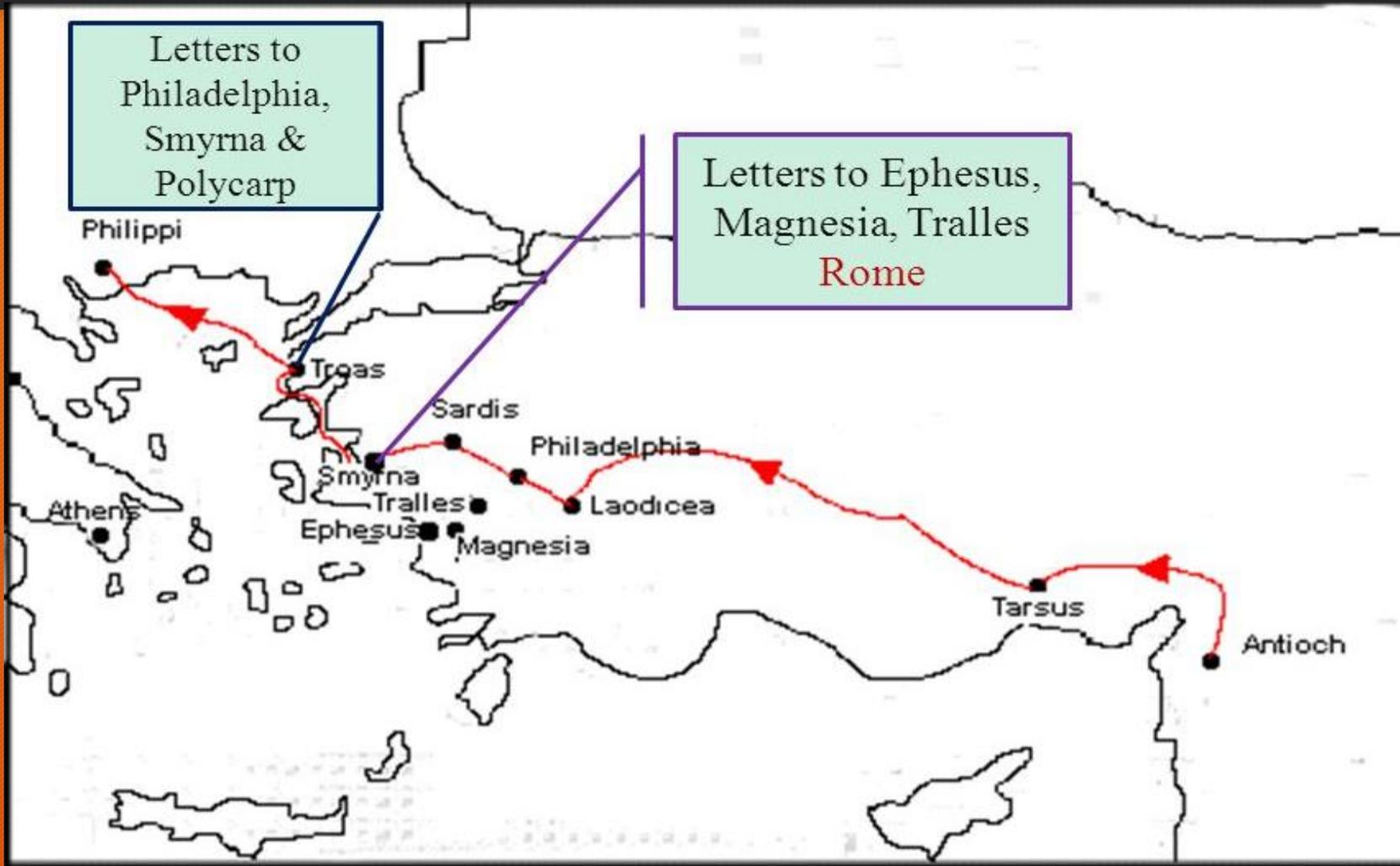
He was martyred in Rome



- Known route
- Conjectured route

Ignatius was arrested in Antioch where he was bishop

# The Seven Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch



**Ephesians**  
**Magnesians**  
**Trallians**  
**Romans**  
**Philadelphians**  
**Smyrneans**  
**Polycarp**

# CENTERED IN THE BISHOP

Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop.

Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [celebrated] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.

(Ep. to Smyrneans, ch. 8)



# United in One Eucharist

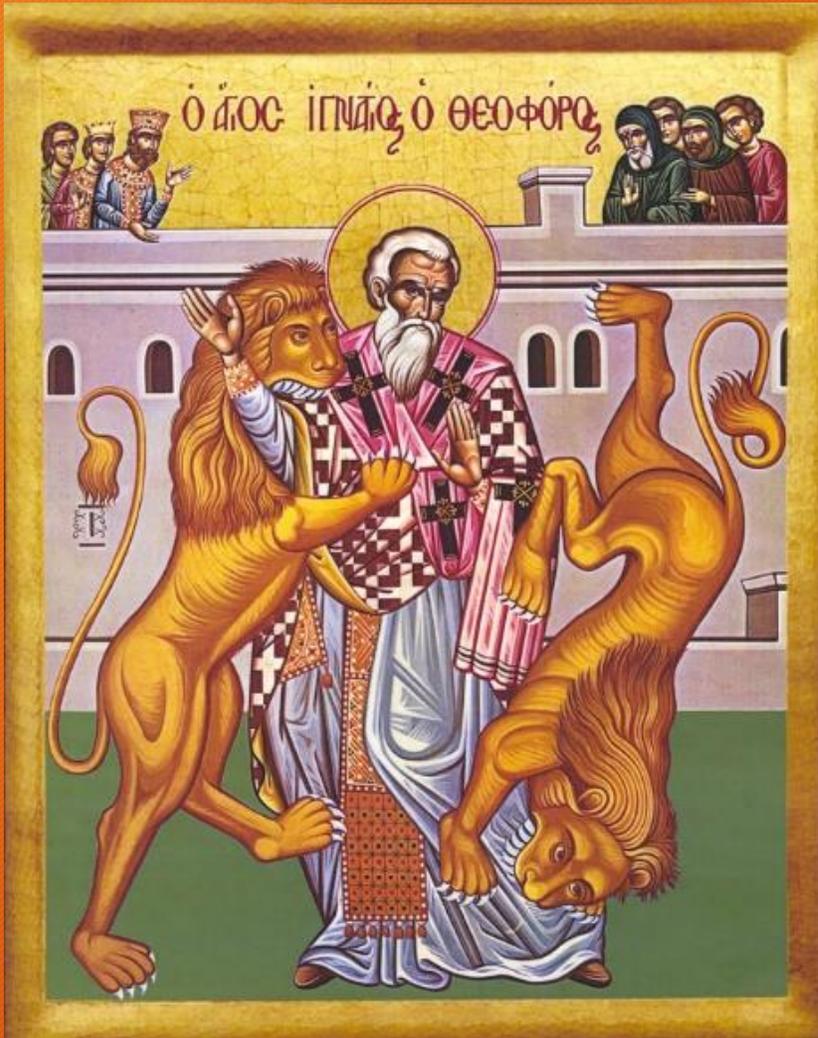


**Be diligent, therefore, to use one eucharist, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup, for union with his blood; one altar, even as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons, who are my fellow-servants, to the end that whatever ye do, ye may do it according unto God.  
(*Ep. to Philadelphians, 4*)**



# Saint Ignatius Martyred in Rome

C. 110



**Forasmuch as in answer to my prayer to God it hath been granted me to see your godly countenances, so that I have obtained even more than I asked; for wearing bonds in Christ Jesus I hope to salute you, if it be the Divine will that I should be counted worthy to reach unto the end; 1:2 for the beginning verily is well ordered, if so be I shall attain unto the goal, that I may receive mine inheritance without hinderance. For I dread your very love, lest it do me an injury; for it is easy for you to do what ye will, but for me it is difficult to attain unto God, unless ye shall spare me.**

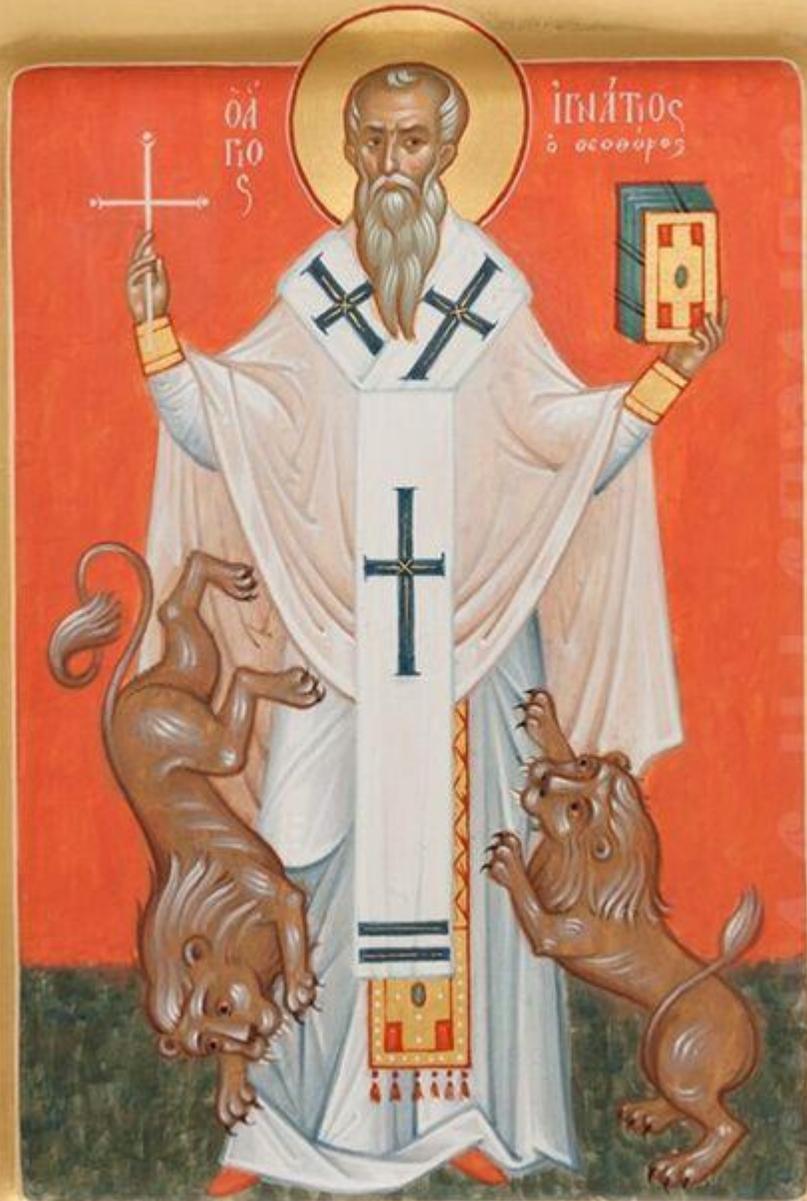
***(Ep. To the Romans 1:1)***



**For I would not have you to be men-pleasers but to please God, as indeed ye do please Him. For neither shall I myself ever find an opportunity such as this to attain unto God, nor can ye, if ye be silent, win the credit of any nobler work.**

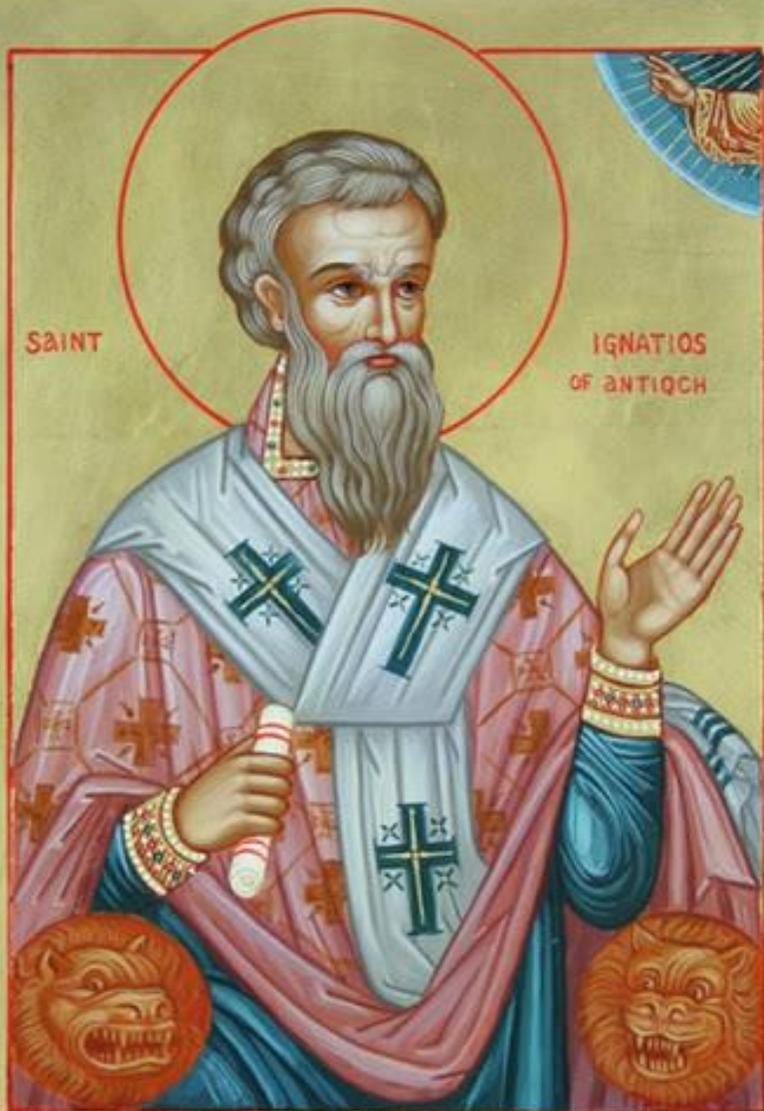
**For, if ye be silent and leave me alone, I am a word of God; but if ye desire my flesh, then shall I be again a mere cry.**

***(Ep. to Romans, 2:1)***



**[Nay] grant me nothing more than that I be poured out a libation to God, while there is still an altar ready; that forming yourselves into a chorus in love ye may sing to the Father in Jesus Christ, for that God hath vouchsafed that the bishop from Syria should be found in the West, having summoned him from the East. It is good to set from the world unto God, that I may rise unto Him.**

***{ Ep. to Romans, 2:2 }***



**Only pray that I may have power within and without, so that I may not only say it but also desire it; that I may not only be called a Christian, but also be found one. For if I shall be found so, then can I also be called one, and be faithful then, when I am no more visible to the world.**

***(Ep. to the Romans, 3.2)***

**I write to all the churches, and I bid all men know, that of my own free will I die for God, unless ye should hinder me. I exhort you, be ye not an unseasonable kindness to me. Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread [of Christ]. 4:2 Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my sepulchre and may leave no part of my body behind, so that I may not, when I am fallen asleep, be burdensome to any one. Then shall I be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not so much as see my body. Supplicate the Lord for me, that through these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God. 4:3 I do not enjoin you, as Peter and Paul did. They were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am a slave to this very hour. Yet if I shall suffer, then am I a freed-man of Jesus Christ, and I shall rise free in Him. Now I am learning in my bonds to put away every desire.**

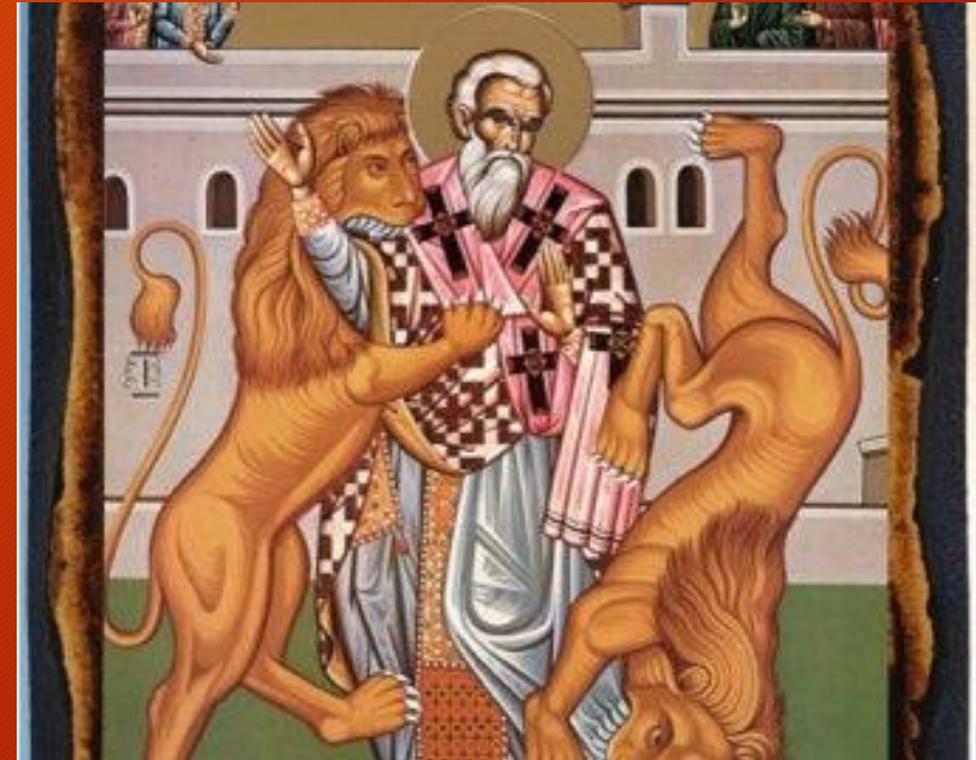
***(Ep. to the Romans, 4)***

**Bear with me. I know what is  
expedient for me.**

**Now am I beginning to be a disciple.**

**May nought of things visible and  
things invisible envy me; that I may  
attain unto Jesus Christ. Come fire and  
cross and grapplings with wild beasts,  
[cuttings and manglings,] wrenching of  
bones, hacking of limbs, crushings of  
my whole body, come cruel tortures of  
the devil to assail me. Only be it mine  
to attain unto Jesus Christ.**

***{Ep. to the Romans, 5.3}***



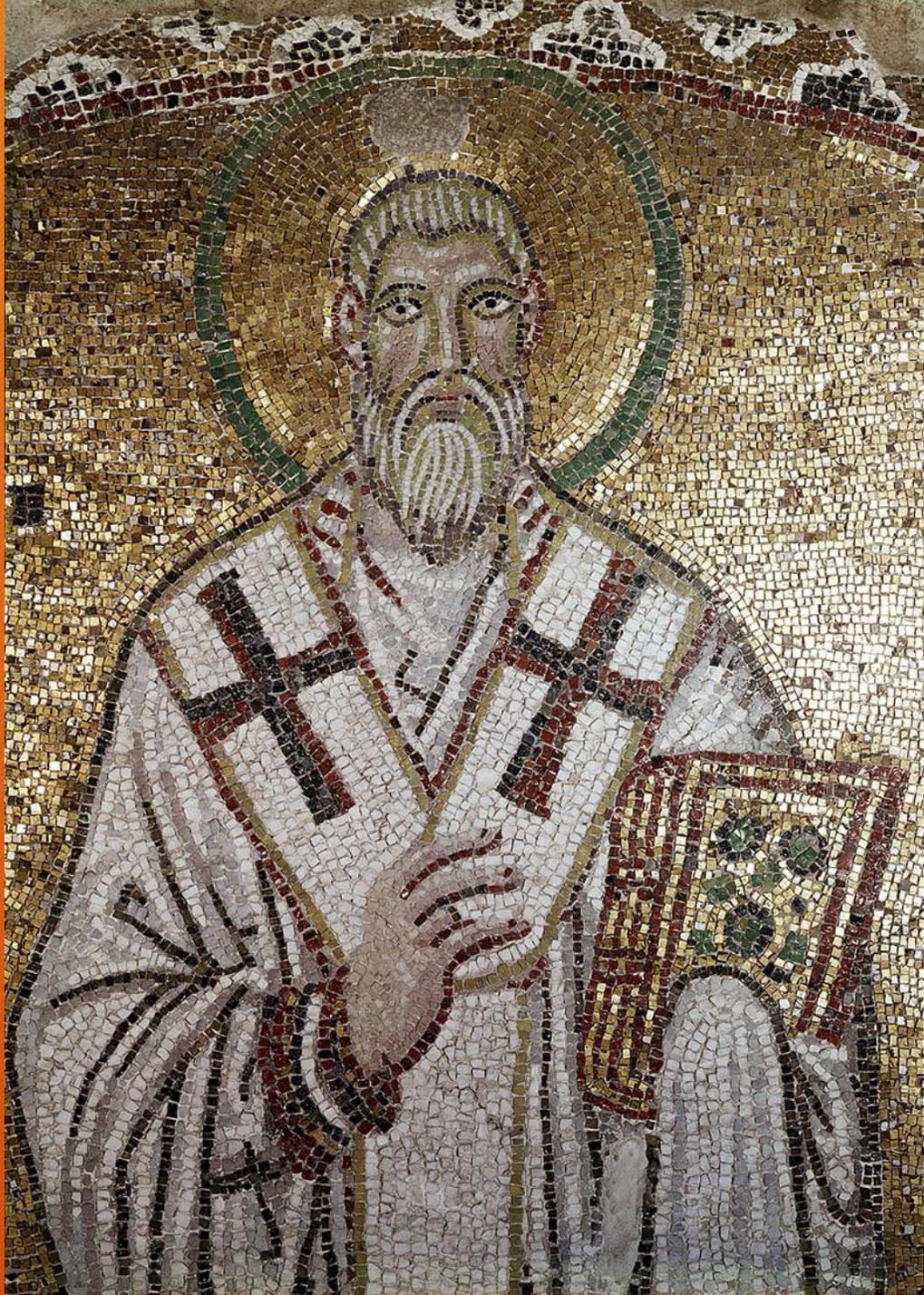
**The farthest bounds of the universe shall profit me nothing, neither the kingdoms of this world. It is good for me to die for Jesus Christ rather than to reign over the farthest bounds of the earth. Him I seek, who died on our behalf; Him I desire, who rose again [for our sake]. The pangs of a new birth are upon me. 6:2 Bear with me, brethren. Do not hinder me from living; do not desire my death. Bestow not on the world one who desireth to be God's, neither allure him with material things. Suffer me to receive the pure light. When I am come thither, then shall I be a man. 6:3 Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. If any man hath Him within himself, let him understand what I desire, and let him have fellow-feeling with me, for he knoweth the things which straiten me.**

***(Ep. to the Romans, Ch. 6)***

...For these  
are the  
beginning and  
end of life-  
Faith is the  
beginning and  
Love is  
the end-  
And these two  
being found  
in unity are  
God...

*(Ep. to  
Ephesians, 14)*





**Now I am  
becoming a  
disciple**

**Now I am found  
to be a Christian**

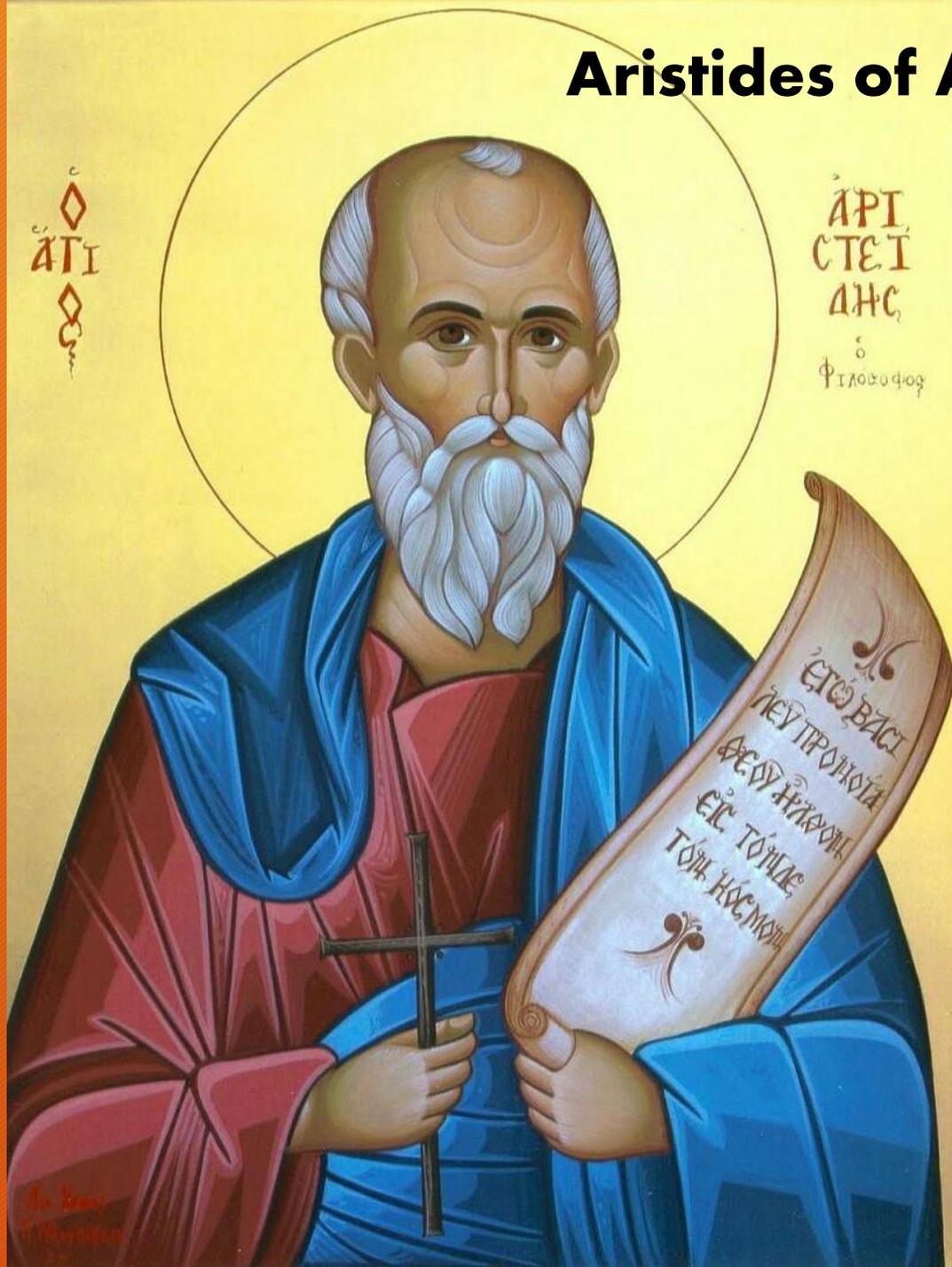
**Now I become a  
human being**

# THE APOLOGISTS

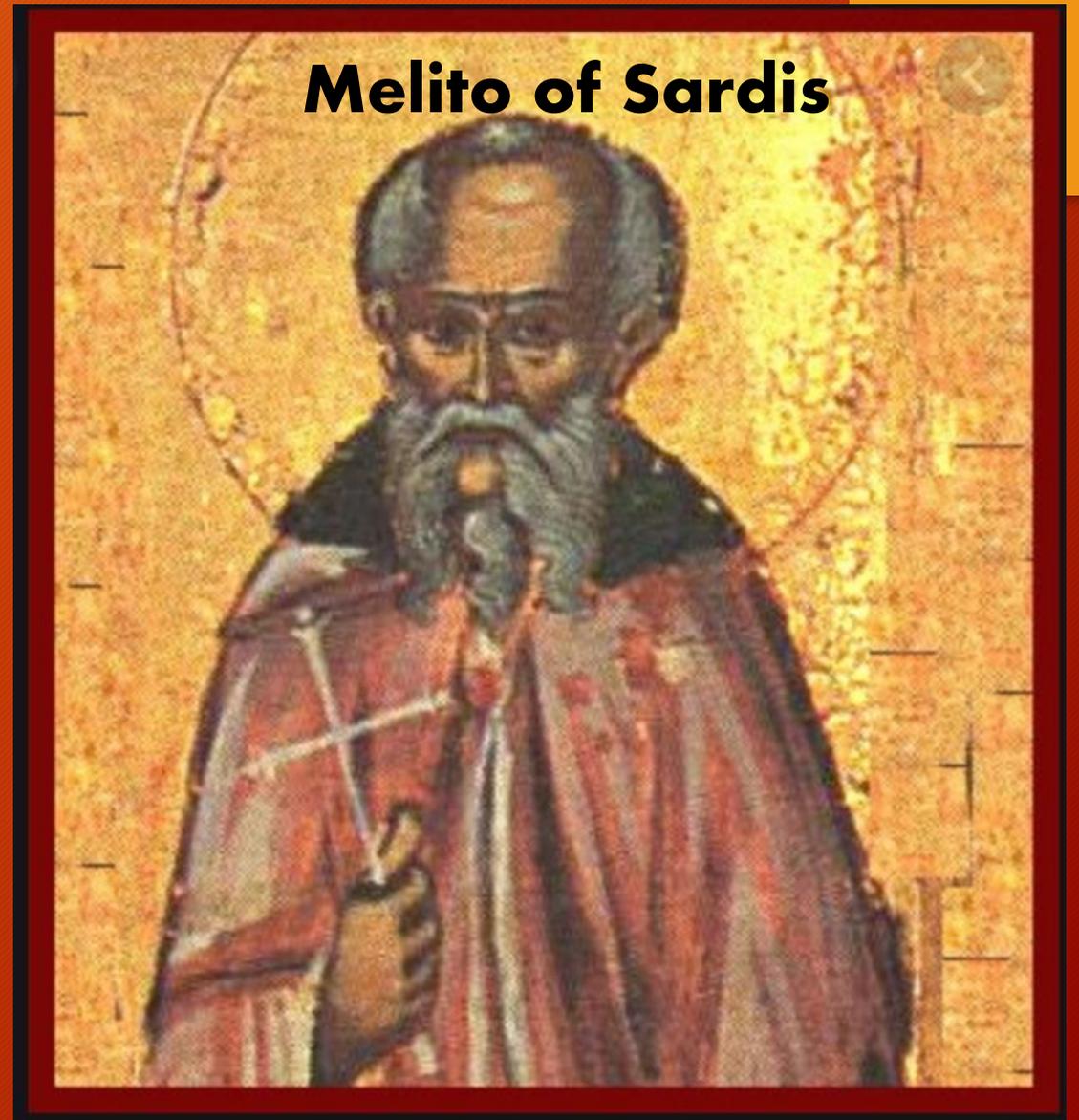
**For the first time, the Church looked outward to face and dialogue with the surrounding culture. They had three basic tasks:**

- 1. To defend and advocate for the Christian faith to an ignorant and/or hostile audience.**
- 2. To demonstrate the absurdities and immoralities within the pagan culture, mythology and mind-set.**
- 3. To show that the path of Greek philosophy was not a proper source of truth, and that truth is only known in Jesus Christ.**

# Aristides of Athens



# Melito of Sardis



# Excerpt from the *Apology* of Aristides of Athens,<sup>15</sup>

They have the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself graven upon their hearts; and they observe them, looking forward to the resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come. They do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor covet the things of others... they appeal to those who injure them, and try to win them as friends; they are eager to do good to their enemies; they are gentle and easy to be entreated; they abstain from all unlawful conversation and from all impurity; they despise not the widow, nor oppress the orphan; and he that has, gives ungrudgingly for the maintenance of him who has not.

**If they see a stranger, they take him under their roof, and rejoice over him as over a very brother; for they call themselves brethren not after the flesh but after the spirit. And they are ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Christ; for they observe His commands without swerving, and live holy and just lives, as the Lord God enjoined upon them. ...And if there is among them any that is poor and needy, and if they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to supply to the needy their lack of food. They observe the precepts of their Messiah with much care, living justly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and every hour they give thanks and praise to God for His loving-kindnesses toward them; and for their food and their drink they offer thanksgiving to Him.**

# Epistle to Diognetus, Ch. 5

**They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers.**

# **Questions arising from dialogue with other religions and a non-Christian culture:**

- 1. Is there one true religion or are all religions equally valid?**
- 2. If there is one true religion, then how do you know which is the right one?**
- 3. Is there no truth in other religions?**
- 4. Would a good and loving God abandon all the nations and peoples except those who have been taught about Jesus Christ? What about those people who lived before the coming of Christ, or who have never heard about Him?**

# JUSTIN MARTYR

## The Philosopher c.165

You emptied the cup of the wisdom of the Greeks, and thirsted yet again, till you came unto the well where you found water springing to eternal life. And having drunk deeply thereof, you also drank the cup that Christ gave to His disciples. Wherefore, O Justin, we praise you as a philosopher and Martyr of Christ.



# The Seeds of the Logos

**The fullness of Divine Truth is known only in and through God's perfect self-revelation in His Son and Word (Logos) Jesus Christ**

**While this truth is known in its fullness only in the authentic Apostolic Church, the pre-Incarnate Logos was working among all nations to provide some apprehension of God, and to prepare the world for the Incarnation of the Logos. Even now, each person is connected to the Logos, who creates and sustains each human being, and plants within each (in the image of God) that reason (logos) which reflects and apprehends the Divine Logos.**

**Wherever truth is, there is the Christian faith, because Christ is the Truth, and all truth belongs to Him.**

## **First Apology: Ch. XLVI - THE WORD IN THE WORLD BEFORE CHRIST.**

**But lest some should, without reason, and for the perversion of what we teach,... cry out against us as though all men who were born before Him were irresponsible--let us anticipate and solve the difficulty. We have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them; and among the barbarians, Abraham, and Ananias, and Azarias, and Misael, and Elias, and many others whose actions and names we now decline to recount, because we know it would be tedious.**

## **Second Apology: Ch. XIII.-HOW THE WORD HAS BEEN IN ALL MEN**

**For each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic word, seeing what was related to it. But they who contradict themselves on the more important points appear not to have possessed the heavenly wisdom, and the knowledge which cannot be spoken against. Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the property of us Christians. For next to God, we worship and love the Word who is from the unbegotten and ineffable God, since also He became man for our sakes, that, becoming a partaker of our sufferings, He might also bring us healing. For all the writers were able to see realities darkly through the sowing of the implanted word that was in them.**

**Hinduism**

**Buddhism**

**Orthodox  
Christianity  
Fullness of  
Truth**

**Islam**

**Judaism**



## From the OCF page:

- 1. Are we, like St. Justin, looking for the little bits of truth in the world around us?**
- 2. Do we have the discernment of the Spirit to know what from outside the Church can be praised and lifted up as part of God's intended pattern and which are the distortions that must be rejected?**
- 3. Do we see in every person, especially those who disagree with our Christian faith, the mark of our Maker, His own handiwork, the seeds of His Word?**
- 4. Are we cultivating those seeds with love and gentleness or do we let them lie dormant in our neighbors or worse, try to throw them out as garbage?**

## **From the OCF Page:**

**Following the Philosopher, we can take away a few principles:**

- 1. To engage others, our education should be well-rounded—we have to know what others know and believe to open up a dialogue.**
- 2. While recognizing the innate goodness of God's creation, we should pray for the spiritual discernment to recognize distortions of that truth for what they are, not accepting all things wholeheartedly.**

**. 3. Every person has been made in the image and likeness of God, and that includes their reasoning. We have to be respectful of the conclusions others have drawn with that reasoning, even if we think it is incomplete or incorrect.**

**4. We should recognize the seeds of the truth in the thoughts of others as a point of reconciliation and agreement and let them be a starting place for dialogue.**

**5. Love is the water by which the seeds of the Word grow.**



We pray for our enemies; we seek to persuade those who hate us without cause to live conformably to the goodly precepts of Christ, that they may become partakers with us of the joyful hope of blessings from God, the Lord of all.

(St. Justin Martyr)

IZQuotes

# Irenaeus of Lyons

140- 205

**Taught by St. Polycarp, who was taught by St John, who was taught by Jesus**

**East to West: Smyrna to Lyons**

**Defender of the Faith against Heresies**

**One of the first theologians to explain:**

**God**

**Creation**

**Anthropology**

**Who is Jesus Christ**

**How is Jesus Savior**

**Apostolic Tradition**





# Irenaeus of Lyons

140- 205

*The Detection and  
Overthrow of the  
Pretended but False Gnosis  
(Adversus Haereses)*

*The Demonstration of the  
Apostolic Teaching*

# **Gnosticism \* Who Were the Gnostics?**

- **A product of Religious Syncretism**
- **Salvation through Secret Knowledge (Gnosis)**
- **Special Knowledge through the Cult Leader who has special access to the truth**
- **Elitist/ Exclusive salvation**
- **True God is different from the god of the material world (a low-level emanation of the true God)**
- **The Gnostic is a divine spark – through knowledge he/she is liberated from the prison of the material world and reunited with the divine.**



# Why did (and does) False Teaching Flourish?

**“Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced...more true than the truth itself.”**

***(Ad. Hae., Preface to bk 1, 5:2)***

# Who are the Gnostics of Today?



## Some Characteristics to look for:

- **Our obstacle to salvation is ignorance not sin**
- **Self-knowledge leads to salvation**
- **We are trapped in the prison of the material world- we belong elsewhere**
- **We are divine –a “piece” of the divine to be reunited with the divine**
- **Secret teachings given by an enlightened leader for the spiritual elite**

# How to discern between true and false teaching/ the true faith and heresy?



# How to discern between true and false teaching/ the true faith and heresy?

- **Correct Interpretation of Holy Scripture: The entire Bible is a continuous record of God's revelation about himself and his dealings with the world and humanity, and Christ is the key to unlock the truth about Holy Scripture.**
- **The Truth is known openly to all: Christian teaching is public, not private**
- **Unity of faith through time and throughout the world**
- **Apostolic/ Holy Tradition is passed and guarded through Apostolic Succession and secures the true teaching**

# The Scriptures are One Continuous Revelation

**“...and all Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent; and the parables shall harmonize with those passages which are perfectly plain; and those statements the meaning of which is clear, shall serve to explain the parables; and through the many diversified utterances [of Scripture] there shall be heard one harmonious melody in us praising in hymns that God who created all things.” *(Ad Hae II.28.3)***

# Christ is the Center and Key to Know Scripture

**“If any one, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling. For Christ is the treasure which was hid in the field, that is, in this world; but the treasure hid in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and parables...when it is read by the Christians, it is a treasure, hid indeed in a field, but brought to light by the cross of Christ, and explained, both enriching the understanding of men, and showing forth the wisdom of God and declaring His dispensations with regard to man...” (Ad. Hae, IV.26.1)**

# The Universal Truth Preserved in the Church

**“The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father “to gather all things in one,” and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race...”** *(Ad.Hae., l.10.1)*

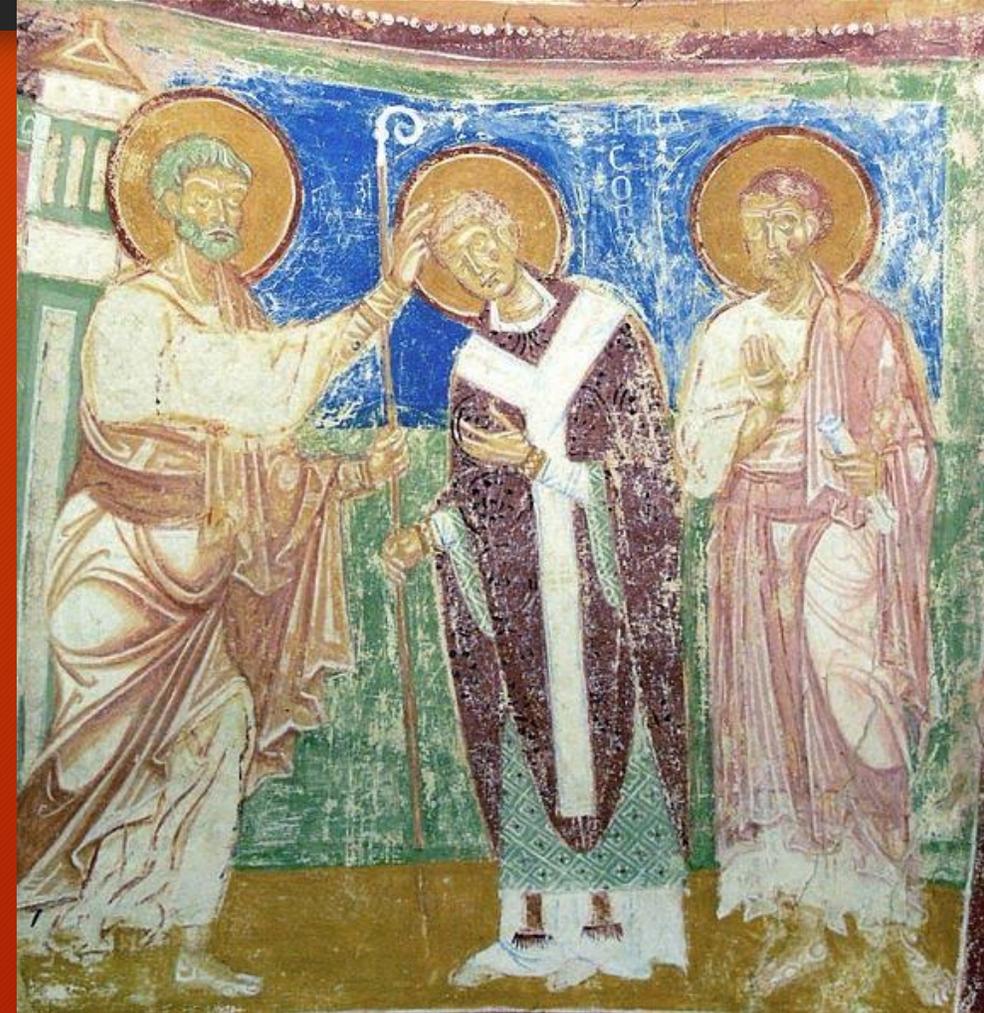
## The Truth Abides in the **One** Holy Apostolic Church:

**“As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same.”** (*Ad Hae., I.10.2*)

# Apostolic: This Truth Comes From The **Apostles** Who Received it from Christ and the Spirit

**“...Clement received the lot of the episcopate; he had seen the apostles and met with them and still had the apostolic preaching in his ears and the tradition before his eyes. He was not alone, for many were then still alive who had been taught by the apostles.”**

***(Ad Hae. III.3)***



**“To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Soter having succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most *abundant proof* that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth. ” (Ad Hae III.3.4)**

# Apostolic Tradition and Apostolic Succession

**“And there is Polycarp, who not only was taught by the apostles and conversed with many who had seen the Lord, but also was established by apostles in Asia in the church at Smyrna. .... He always taught the doctrine he had *learned from the apostles*, which he delivered to the church, and it alone is true. ”**

***(Ad Hae III.4)***



## **Holy: The Spirit is the Source of Truth in the Church**

**“This faith which, having been received from the Church, we do preserve, and which always, by the Spirit of God, renewing its youth as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel, causes the vessel itself containing it to renew its youth also....  
*For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace*” (Ad. Hae. III, 24, 1).**

# Truth and Falsehood Today

## SOME QUESTIONS:

- **Is truth subjective: Is everybody right from their own perspective and/or culture?**
- **Are any truths absolute?**
- **How do we discern truth from falsehood in belief about God?**
- **What false teachings about God, the human condition, salvation, etc. are present today?**

# St. Athanasius the Great (296-373)

- Protector of the Doctrine of the Trinity Against Arianism
- Great Defender of term “homousion” in the Creed
- Unflagging Courage and Faith: Exiled Five Times as Bishop
- Pillar of Orthodoxy



## Athanasius Against the World:

**“Athanasius ‘single-hearted, and sometimes single-handed, had saved the Church from captivity by pagan intellectualism. Indeed he had done more. By his tenacity and vision in preaching one God and Saviour he had preserved from dissolution the Unity and integrity of the Christian faith.’”**

**G.L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics*, Lecture 1, p. 76. Quoted by Henry Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers*, p 27**



# **The Challenge of Arianism: Is Jesus, the Son of God, Fully God as the Father is God?**

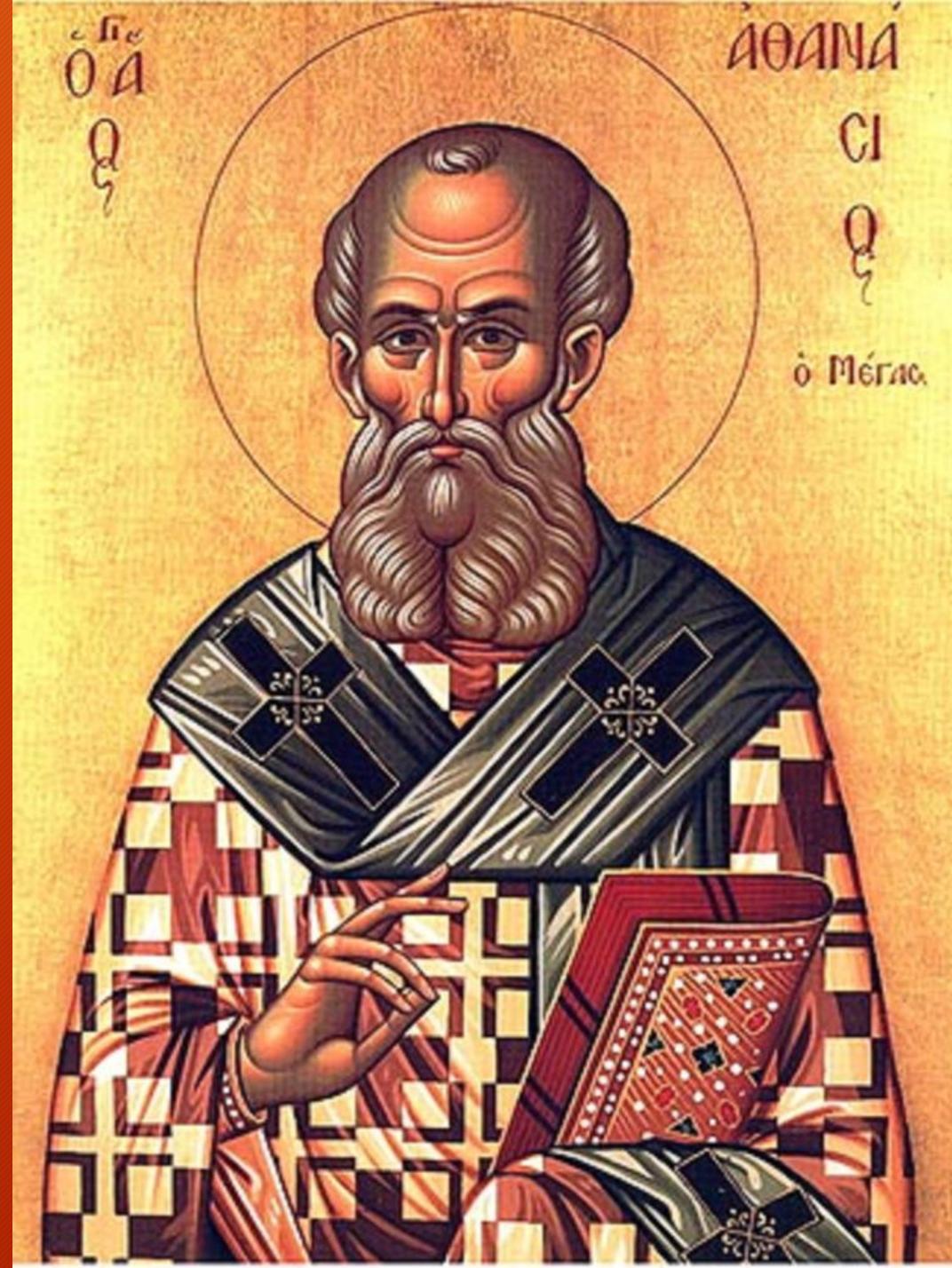
**Arius, a Presbyter (Priest) from the Church of Alexandria, said:**

- The Father is Uniquely God, Uncreated, Self-existent and Immutable**
- The Son of God is Begotten, Subordinate, and not of the same substance as the Father. He Depends on the Father for Existence**
- The Son is not Eternal: There was when He was not**
- The Son of God is the First Born of Creation and the One through Whom Creation is made but is Created**

**For Saint Athanasius the question of the divinity of the Son is not a matter of philosophical or theological speculation but first and foremost a pastoral concern: How are we saved? If we are saved through Jesus, then who must Jesus Christ- our Savior- be so that we are saved?**

**But to answer that question, we first must understand what our condition is: *from* what must we be saved? *For* what are we saved?**

**Athanasius explored these problems in his work, *On the Incarnation*, even before the Arian controversy erupted.**



# Mankind: Created Mortal- Called to Immortality



**“For man is by nature mortal, in that he came into being from non-entity; but because of his likeness to ‘Him Who Is’ he would have lived henceforth as God... had he preserved that likeness by contemplation of God and thus blunted the power of disintegration which is natural to him. For God has not only made us out of non-entity but also bestowed upon us a life like the life of God.”**

***On the Incarnation, 4-5***

# **But Humankind Turned from God and suffered Death**

**“In this way then God made man, and had willed that he should remain in incorruption. But men, having turned from the contemplation of God to evil of their own devising, had come inevitably under the law of death. Instead of remaining in the state in which God had created them, they were in the process of becoming corrupted entirely, and death had them completely under its dominion. ...For if their natural condition was once non-existence and they were summoned into being by the presence and loving-kindness of the Word, it followed that when men were deprived of the knowledge of God and turned back to non-existence (since evil is not-being, good is being) they should forever be deprived even of being, seeing that they have their existence from God ‘Who Is’: that is, that they should disintegrate and remain in death and destruction.” *On the Incarnation, 4***

# What was God to Do?

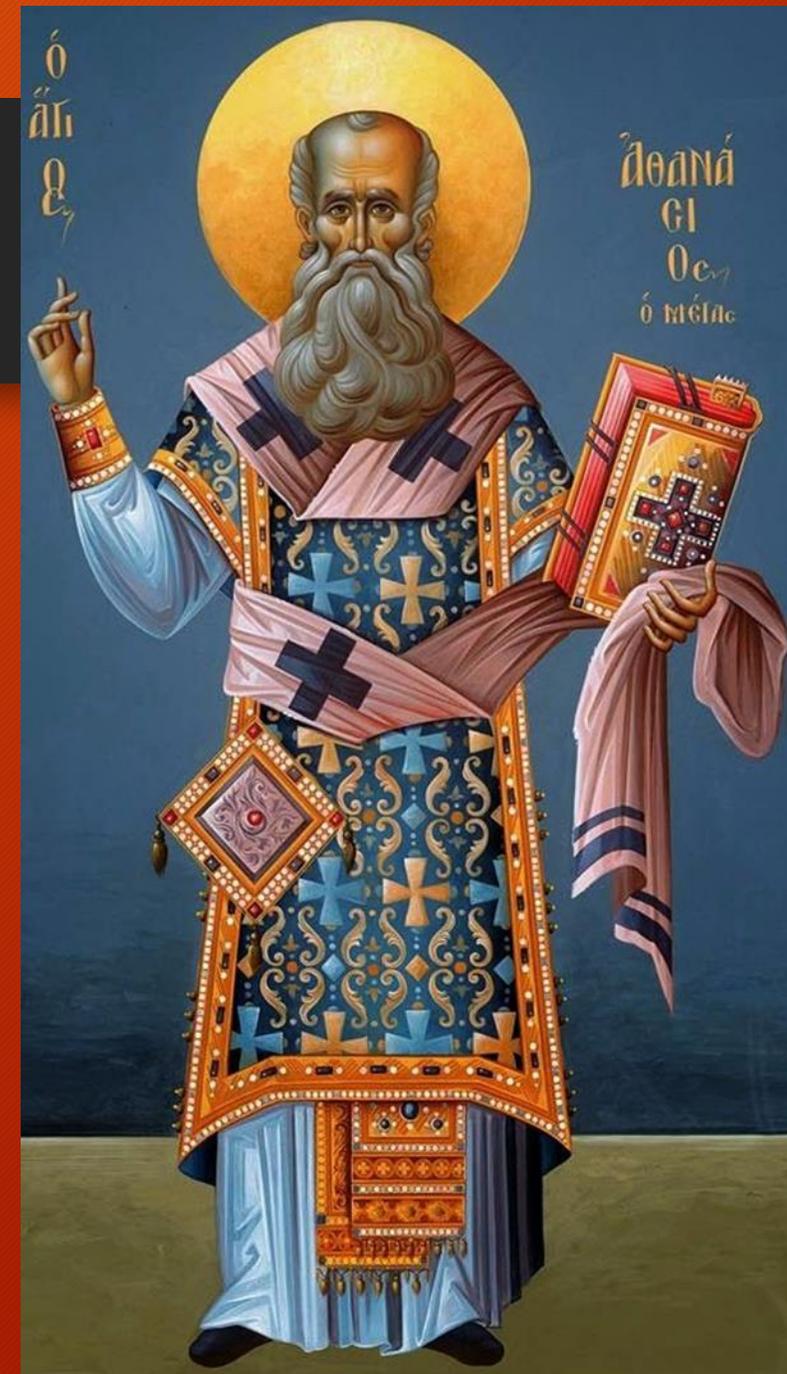
**Humankind was subject to corruption and death because of sin. "Man, who was created in God's image and in his possession of reason reflected the very Word Himself, was disappearing, and the work of God was being undone. ..The thing that was happening was in truth both monstrous and unfitting... As, then, the creatures whom He had created reasonable, like the Word, were in fact perishing, and such noble works were on the road to ruin, what then was God, being Good, to do? Was He to let corruption and death have their way with them? In that case, what was the use of having made them in the beginning?"**

***On the Incarnation, 6***

# The Problem Goes Beyond Sin and the Solution Beyond Forgiveness

**“Had it been a case of trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough; but when once transgression had begun men came under the corruption proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the Image of God. No, repentance could not meet the case.”**

***On the Incarnation, 7***



# What – WHO – Was Needed?

**“What—or rather—*Who* was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing? His part it was, and His alone, both to bring again the corruptible to incorruption and to maintain for the Father His consistency of character with all. For He alone, being Word of the Father and above all, was in consequence both able to recreate all, and worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to be an ambassador for all with the Father.” *On the Incarnation, 7***

**“What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His image in mankind so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ:.. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image.” *On the Incarnation, 13***

# The Son of God, our Savior Jesus Christ, Must be God for us to be Saved

## Only God can save us:

- Only the Creator can renew His Creation
- Only the Image of God can renew that which is created in the image of God
- Only He who is Incorruption and Life can Abolish Corruption and Death
- Only God can bring us into communion with divine life and deify us- no creature can do that for us: "For He was made man, that we might be made God"
- *On the Incarnation, 54*



# **GOD BECAME MAN SO THAT MAN MIGHT BECOME GOD**

**GOD: Uncreated  
He who IS**

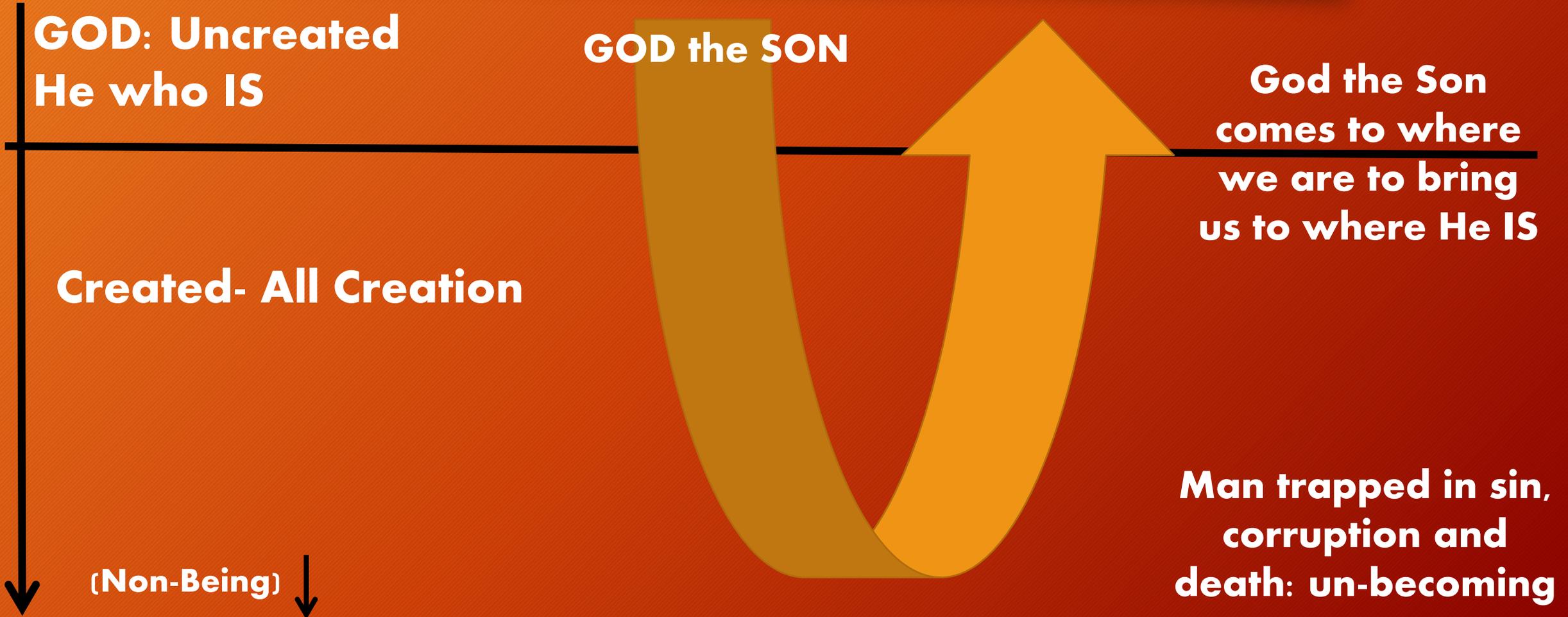
**GOD the SON**

**God the Son  
comes to where  
we are to bring  
us to where He IS**

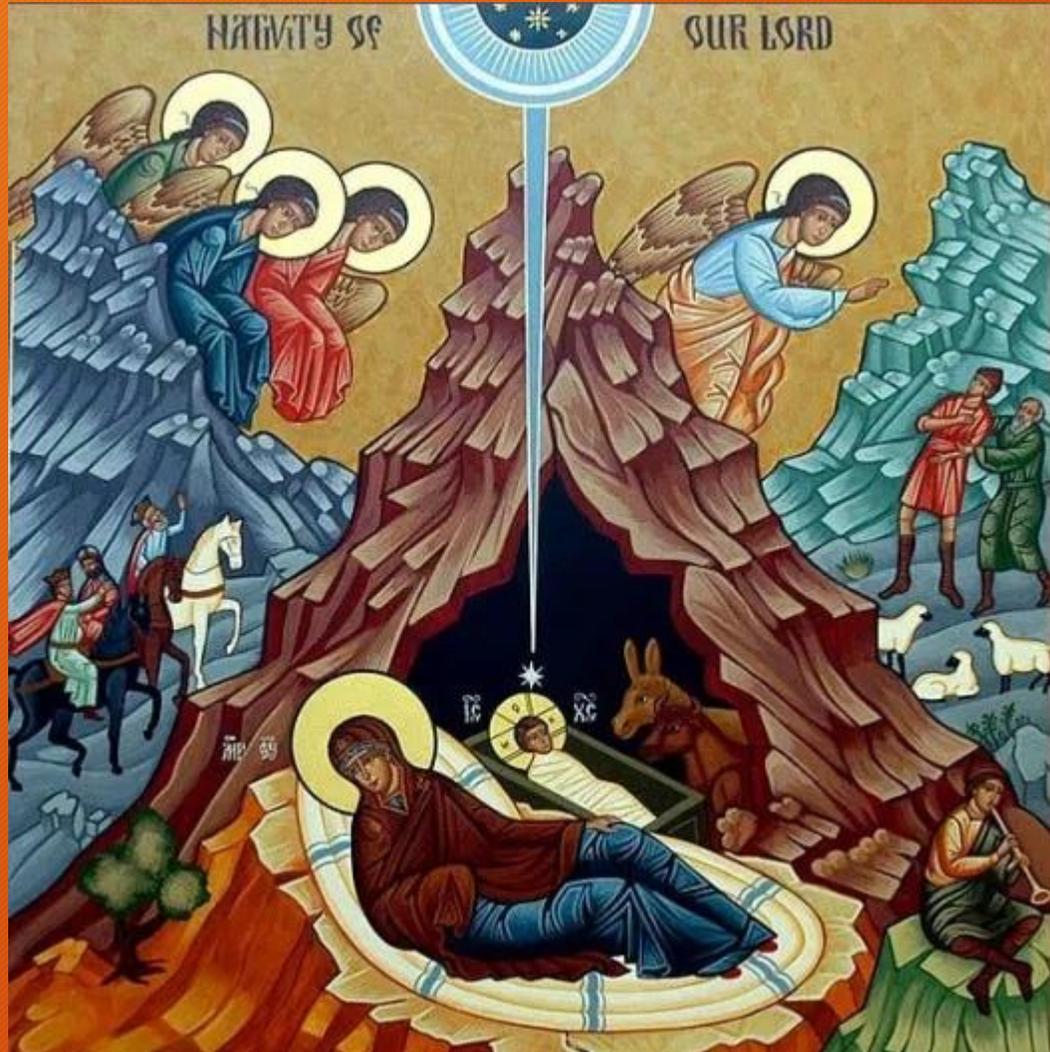
**Created- All Creation**

**Man trapped in sin,  
corruption and  
death: un-becoming**

**(Non-Being)**



# To Enter into Advent is to Enter into the Need for a Savior who is God made Man: the Incarnate One



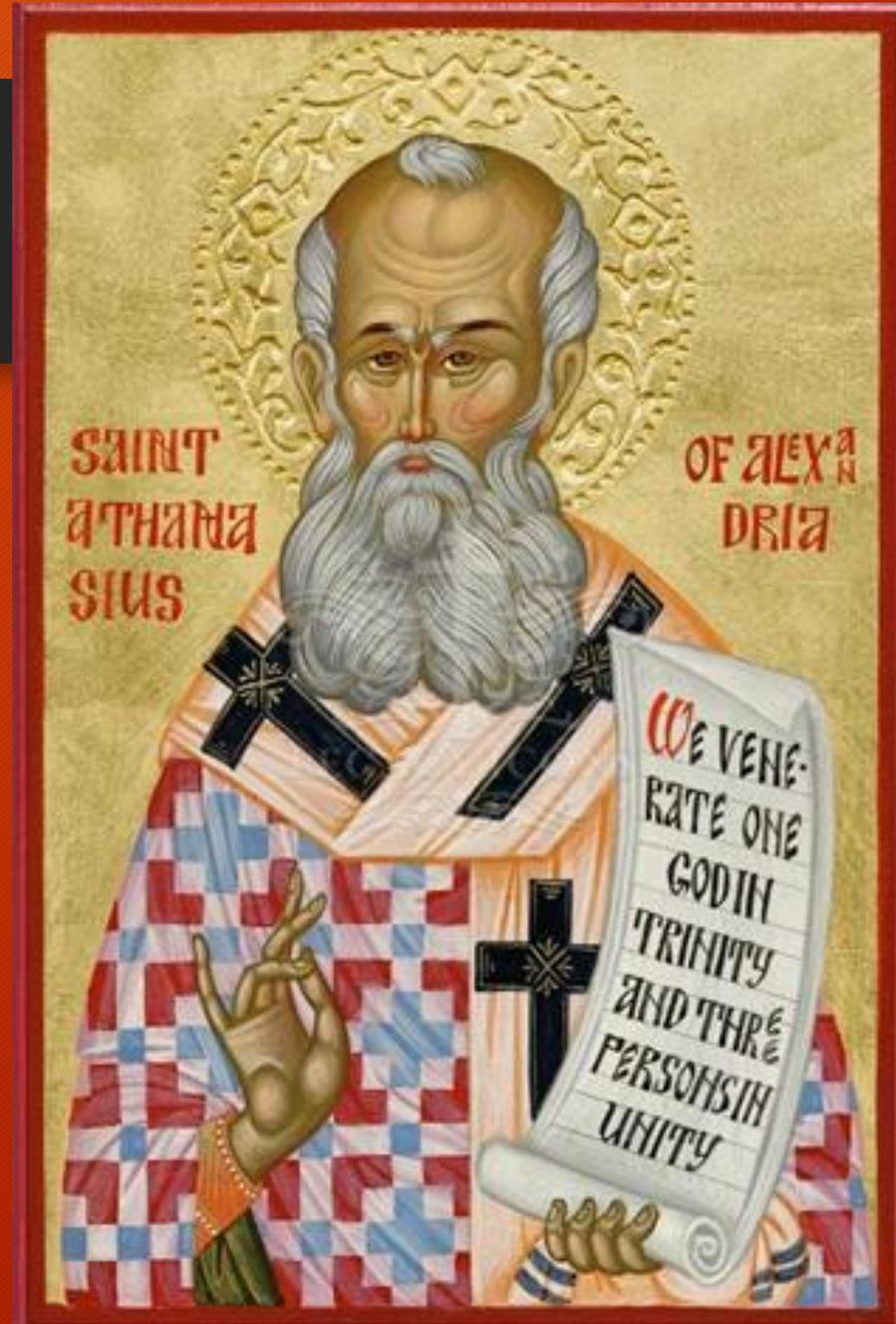
# Athanasius for Today

- **Have you ever been in the position where you had to defend or explain that Christ is God?**
- **What are today's challenges to believing in Christ as God?**
- **What would you say?**
- **What if everyone disagreed? How long would you stand?**
- **How can I be an Athanasius in my own small way for today?**



# Contributions of St. Athanasius

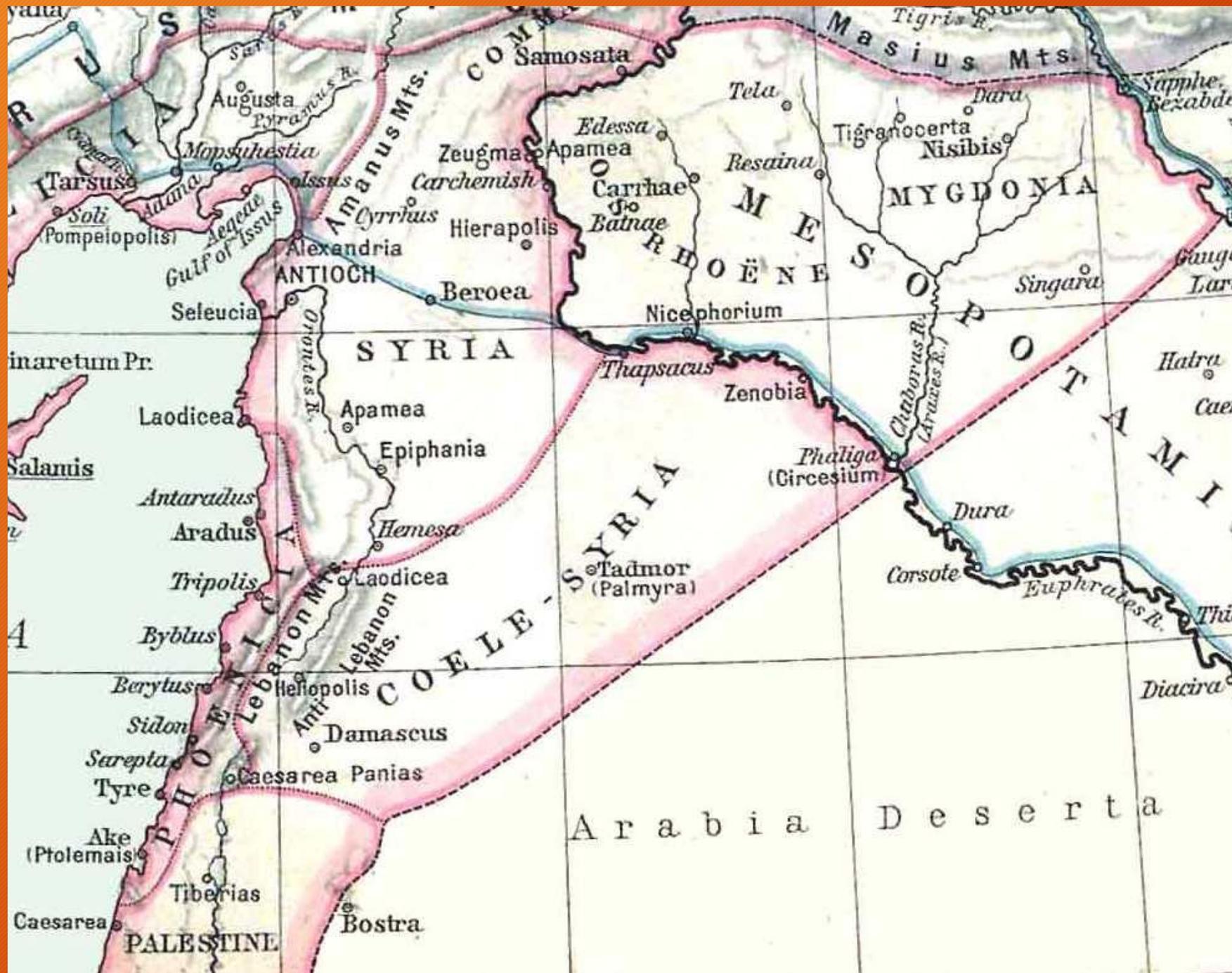
- Although he did not propose the term “homoousios” (consubstantial) for the Creed, he was its greatest advocate and the defender of the Trinity.
- He reconciled the opposing parties in the Church to bring unity
- An enthusiastic supporter of monasticism: his *Life of Antony* set the world on fire for the monastic life
- He was instrumental in determining which books are to be included in the canon of the New Testament



St Ephraim the Syrian  
306-373

*The Harp of the  
Holy Spirit*



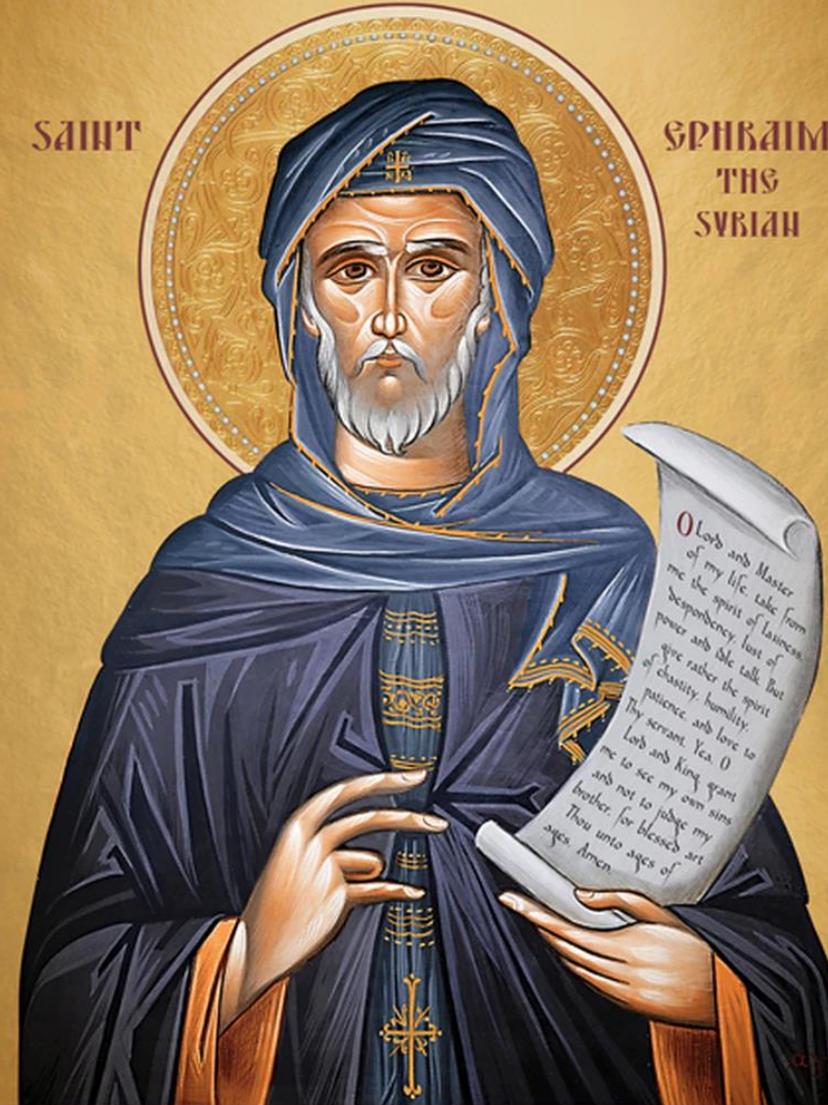


**Early Christian Centers were not only Greek and Roman, but also Syrian. Syriac (an Aramaic language) was the third great Christian Language. and Nisibis - and later Edessa - were centers of Christian Education and Scholarship**

O Lord and Master of my  
life, take from me the  
spirit of sloth, despondency,  
lust for power and idle talk.  
But grant unto me, Thy  
servant, a spirit of  
chastity, humility, patience  
and love.  
Yea, O Lord and King, grant  
me to see mine own faults  
and not to judge my broth-  
ers and sisters. For  
blessed art Thou unto ages  
of ages.  
Amen

SANCT

SERBAIM  
THE  
SERVIAH





## **One of the Greatest Orthodox Theologian-Poets**

**Educator and director of  
Christian School of Nisibis  
and, later, the Christian  
School of Edessa**

**Over 1,000 Writings, in artistic  
prose, verse homilies  
(memre), or hymns  
(madrashé)**

**Famous Hymns by St. Ephraim include:**

**Hymns on the Pearl (Seven Hymns  
on the Word)**

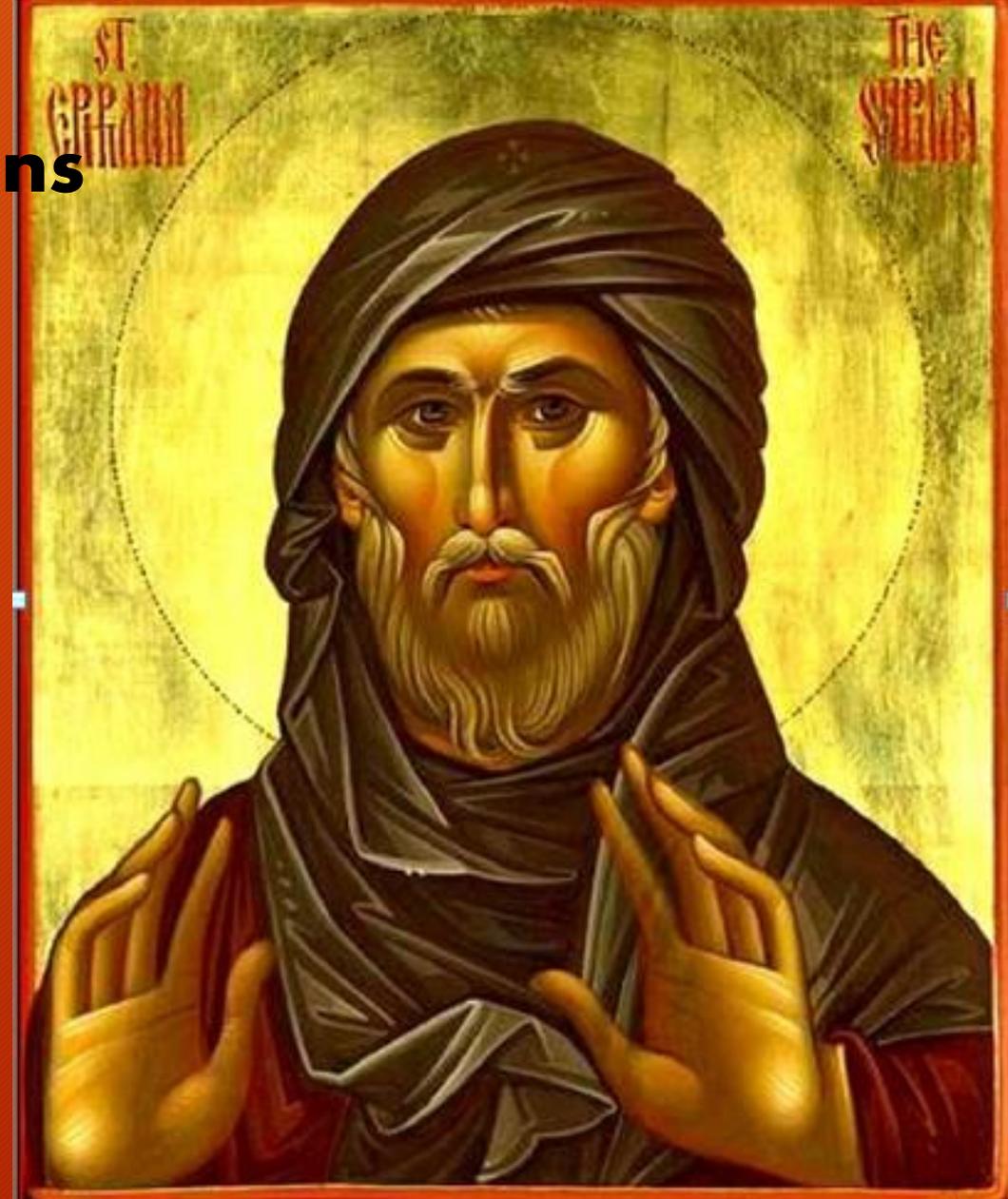
**Hymns on Paradise**

**Hymns on the Nativity**

**Hymns on Fasting**

**Hymns on the Crucifixion**

**Hymns on the Resurrection**



**St Ephraim's Hymns reflect a profound understanding of Christian doctrine and theology, are immersed in Scriptural references, allusions, and typologies, and operate as Scriptural interpretations and homilies.**



**Many of St Ephraim's Hymns were specifically written for women's choirs**

We came to see the way of life that was Your lot  
From the House of David. From [among] his beds  
You inherited a manger. From [among] his palaces  
A cave was Your lot. Instead of his chariot  
The despised ass is now Your lot.  
Who would believe that You have inherited  
The throne of David? We go away to scorn,  
To disregard You. Heaven cries out  
And the earth below. After we have scorned  
We bow before You, the Hidden Power!  
How bold You are Babe, Who bestows Himself  
Upon all. At everyone who meets You  
You smile. To meet everyone who sees You,  
You eagerly wait. It is as if Your love  
Hungers for human beings.

*Hymns On the Nativity, Hymn 13:10-12*



**Blessed is Your day, my Lord, that first one  
By which Your feastday is appointed.**

***Refrain: Blessed is He Who gave You to  
us without our asking, so that by You  
we might thank Your Father for His gift.***

**Your day resembles You, for it is a lover of  
human beings...**

**Lord, let Your day be like You for us.**

**Let it be a means and a pledge of peace.**

**It is Your day that reconciled heaven and earth,  
For on it the Heavenly One descends to the  
earthly ones...**

***From Hymns on the Nativity, Hymn 4: 1-2, 13-14***



**Blessed be the Child Who today delights Bethlehem.  
Blessed be the Newborn Who today made humanity young again.  
Blessed be the Fruit Who bowed Himself down for our hunger.  
Blessed be the Gracious One Who suddenly enriched  
All of our poverty and filled our need.  
Blessed be He Whose mercy inclined Him to heal our sickness.**

***Refrain:***

***My Lord, Blessed be Your Child,  
Who raised to honor our hardness  
of heart.***

***Hymns of the Nativity: Hymn 3:1***



**My Lord, this day gladdens kings, priests and prophets,  
For on it were fulfilled and realized all their words.  
Since today the Virgin has given birth to Emmanuel in  
Bethlehem,**

**The word Isaiah spoke was accomplished today.**

...

**The hidden light descended and its beauty shone forth from  
a body;**

**The dawn of which Zechariah spoke lights up Bethlehem  
today.**

...

**The tree of life brings hope to the dying;**

**The hidden saying of Solomon found its explanation today.**

**Today a child was born, and he was called, "wonder,"**

**For it is a wonder that God reveals Himself as an infant.**

***Hymns of the Nativity, Hymn 1: 1-2, 6, 8***





**My mouth knows not how to address You,  
O Son of the Living One. ..**

**Although You are the Son of the One,  
I shall call you henceforth,  
Son of many, for myriads of names  
Do not suffice for You,  
For You are Son of God  
And Son of Man and Son of Joseph  
And Son of David and Lord of Mary.**

**...**

**Behold, the sea is stirred up against Your mother  
As against Jonah. Behold Herod,  
The raging surf, seeks to drown  
The Lord of the seas. Where shall I flee?  
Teach me, Lord of His mother.  
With You I shall flee to acquire by You  
Life in every place. With You, the pit  
Would not be the pit, for with You one would  
Ascend to heaven. With You, the grave,  
Would not be the grave, for You are also the  
Resurrection.**

***Hymns of the Nativity, Hymn 6: 1, 5-6***



**“I shall not be jealous, my Son**

**That You are both with me and with everyone.**

**Be God to the one who confesses You,**

**And be Lord to the one who serves You,**

**And be brother to the one who loves You,**

**So that You might save all.”**

***Hymns of the Nativity, Hymn 16:1***

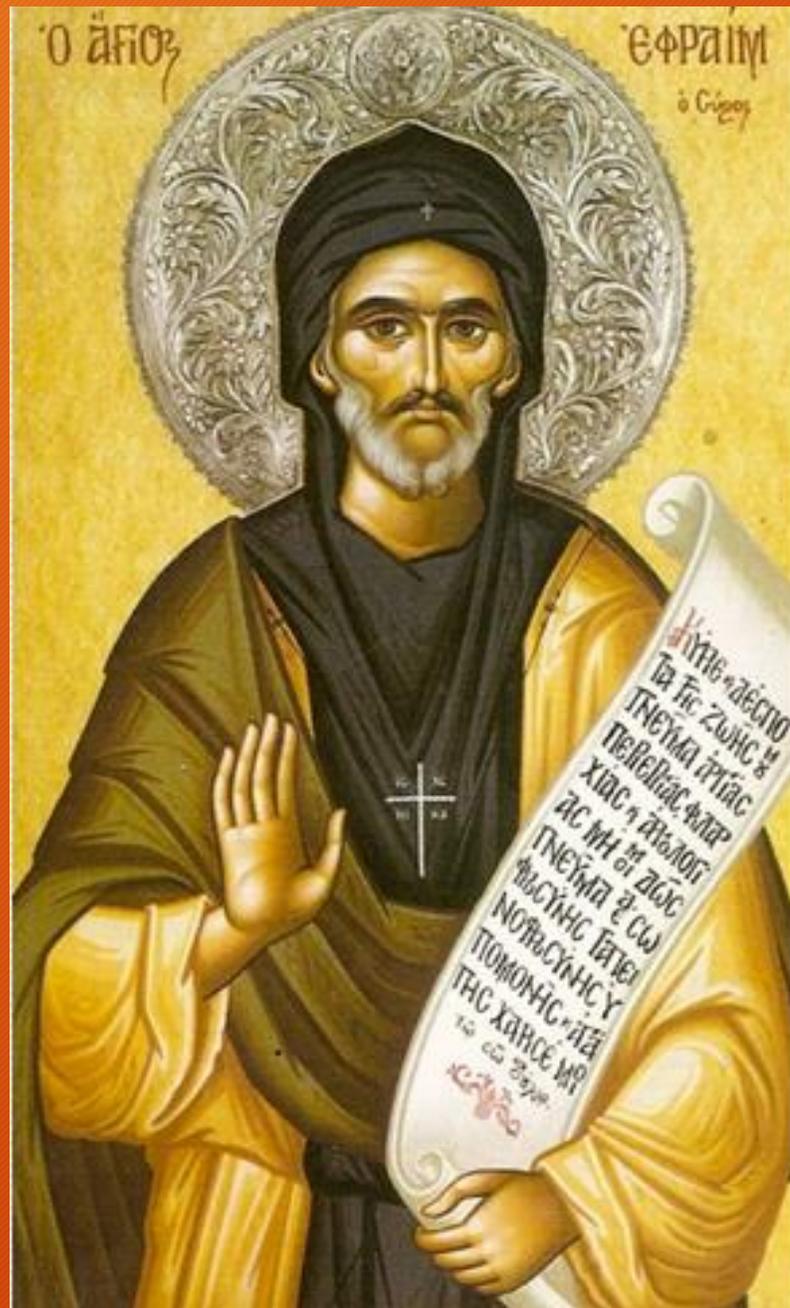
**The Light of the just and joy of the upright  
Is Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Begotten of the Father,  
He manifested himself to us.  
He came to rescue us from darkness  
And to fill us with the radiance of His light.  
Day is dawning upon us;  
The power of darkness is fading away.  
From the true Light there arises for us  
The light which illumines our darkened eyes.  
His glory shines upon the world  
And enlightens the very depths of the abyss.  
Death is annihilated, night has vanished,  
And the gates of Sheol are broken.**

**...**

**Our King comes in majestic glory.  
Let us light our lamps and go forth to meet Him.  
Let us find our joy in Him, for He has found joy in us.  
He will indeed rejoice us with His marvelous light.**

***From Hymn to the Light***





**"My beloved brethren,  
let us not prefer  
anything, let us not  
hasten to obtain  
anything more than  
love. Let no one have  
anything against  
anyone, let no one  
repay evil for evil. Do  
not let the sun go  
down on your anger,  
but let us forgive our  
debtors everything &  
let us welcome love,  
because love covers  
a multitude of sins."**

**~ St Ephrem**