

Today we celebrate the Memorial of St. Athanasius, who was born at the end of the third century. The world at that time was in many ways like our own. A diverse population converged on the many centers of learning found throughout the Roman Empire.

Like our own time, there were many popular preachers who thought that they knew better than - what was then - three centuries of Christian orthodoxy.

The Arian heresy had penetrated nearly all of Christianity, teaching that Jesus wasn't God, but was merely an elevated creature ... and with the infection of that false belief, all the other aspects of the Faith began to fall away as well.

Athanasius was known for his precision in thinking, which offended those who were happy in their ignorance. He was from Alexandria, Egypt ... and was short of stature. His enemies called him "the Black Dwarf," and for the 44 years he spent as Bishop of Alexandria, he was exiled five times by the Arians - being forced out of his see for a total of 17 years.

The Creed we use at Mass, which states:

*I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.*

Each of those statements: (1) Only Begotten, (2) Son of God, (3) born of the Father before all ages, (4) God from God, (5) Light from Light, (6) begotten, not made (7) consubstantial with the Father ... reflect the precision that Athanasius introduced into the theology of the day that and has been handed down to us in that Creed.

In our own day and age, we have many differing voices that want to tell us who Jesus is or isn't. And the understanding of our Gift of Faith, infused at Baptism, requires precision in thinking. It can be tempting, often, to assume a popular secular view ... rather than persevering in the precision of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Faith.

If we choose our own way, instead of Jesus - Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life - we can end up in the position of "*fighting against God*" ... which we hear in the first reading from Acts.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray for the grace of perseverance in our Faith. If we are still "*fighting against God*" in relation to some teaching or doctrine, let us pray for the spirit of understanding that we might delve with precision into the teachings of the Church.

May we, through God's grace, grow ever deeper in Faith, Hope, and Love ... as we proceed through the remaining days of this Easter Season.