

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

Objectives

Study the biography of the St Athanasius and his great stand to oppose the heretics

References

- ❖ Asr El Magamee “Time of Councils” (Fr. Antoon El Syrian)
- ❖ St. Athanasius the Apostolic (Fr. Tadros Malaty)
- ❖ The Sacrament of Confirmation (Bishop Mettaos)
- ❖ Synexarium of the 7th of Bashans

Scriptural Verse

“I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night”
(Isaiah 62: 6)

Lesson Outline

Upbringing

- ❖ St. Athanasius was born around the year 296 in Alexandria from Pagan Parents. His father died in his early childhood and his mother raised him up.
- ❖ He loved the Christians and was playing with them. They made him to act the role of a bishop who baptizes children and he performed the rite of Baptism very well.
- ❖ Pope Alexandros saw him and he was pleased with his talents. He baptized him and his mother and kept him in the Patriarchate to be under his supervision.
- ❖ He joined the theological school of Alexandria. He surpassed all his colleagues in all theological and philosophical subjects to the point that he wrote his first book “A letter to the Pagans” while he was still a student.
- ❖ He completed his study and went to the wilderness to study Godliness under the feet of St. Anthony.

Relationship with St. Anthony

- ❖ St. Athanasius did not become a monk but he was a faithful disciple to St. Anthony and adopted the spirituality and Godliness of his master. He learned how to overcome the devils by prayers and how to rejoice always in the Lord Jesus Christ even in the worst situations.
- ❖ He stayed with him 3 years and wrote a great book about his life and this book was able to turn St. Augustine from his bad life to become a Great Saint.
- ❖ St. Anthony left his monastery and went to Alexandria to fight the Arians with St. Athanasius
- ❖ St. Paul asked St. Anthony to bring the Tunic of St. Athanasius for his burial and gave him instead his Palm fiber tunic. St. Athanasius used to wear the fiber tunic 3 times a year and with it he raised a dead person.
- ❖ Before his departure St. Anthony commanded to give his sheepskin to St. Athanasius.

Church Services and struggles

- ❖ Pope Alexandros (the 19th Pope) ordained him a deacon then an archdeacon then a helper to him and used to forward to him all the complicated issues to solve it.
- ❖ He opposed the heresy of Arius and taught the right faith. The Pope took him to the Council of Nicea and he showed godly commitment in defending the right faith. Emperor Constantine gave him the title “Hero of Faith”
- ❖ He put the Creed in which every word is backed up by a bible quotation. All churches recite this same creed.
- ❖ He was ordained a Pope against his will(as commanded by Pope Alexandros). For the 1st time, 50 Bishops gathered and attended to ordain him in a joyful celebration
- ❖ St. Pachomius saw a vision and was told that Pope Athanasius is a pillar and light for the church and will suffer greatly to keep the Orthodox faith and God will grant him to keep the faith unblemished.
- ❖ He ordained the 1st Bishop for Ethiopia and from that time Ethiopia followed the church of Alexandria and is under its leadership.
- ❖ St. Athanasius was the 1st one to prepare the Holy Myron after the Apostles. He sent parts to Rome, Antioch and Constantinople with a document of how it should be made along with the used spices.
- ❖ He served the Church as a Pope for forty seven years during which he enlightened Christianity by his teachings and writings and God honored him by performing miracles.
- ❖ St. Athanasius was exiled 5 times because of his opposition to the heresy of Arius who blasphemed against the son of God considering Him not equal to the father and did not exist from the beginning. He suffered a lot, was accused by many false accusations but God delivered him from them all and proved his innocence.
Ex: they said he raped a nun. They brought a harlot who claimed that St. Athanasius raped her. The disciple of Pope Athanasius, a priest called Timothy (became Pope Timothy) said to her: "How dare you to say that I came to your house, and overpowered your will?" She did not know him, and she said: "You are". At once the false claim was exposed.
- ❖ He departed in peace at the age of 77 in the year 373 after a life full of struggle, sufferings, services and blessings

Conclusion

St. Athanasius offered his life to oppose the heresy of Arius. He accepted sufferings, exiles and humility to oppose the heretics. He so deserved to be called The Apostolic, defender of faith and the hero of Orthodoxy. We also have to work hard to keep this great faith unblemished.

Activities /Discussion Points

- They said to St. Athanasius: The world is against you. He replied: And I am against the world. Why it was so important to oppose Arius and his teachings for the faith of the church? (The Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ is the base of our salvation; otherwise His sacrifice would not be unlimited and sufficient to redeem the sins of all the humanity)
- Write down parts of the creed and make groups to find out the Bible verses that approve the creed.