

Today we celebrate the memorial of the Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council and we have the Gospel reading from John “the High Priestly Prayer”. These seem like 2 different things, but they come together in a special way.

First, the council. It was the first general assembly of the Church after the legalization of Christianity in AD 316 . Immediately after that legalization, differences arose about who Christ had been, or who He was and how we should deal with Him. In the time of the catacombs it was obvious; becoming a Christian put your life in danger and so you only got baptized if you were deeply moved by His Grace and realized that following Christ was more important than anything, including your own life. After the legalization of the faith there was also room for a much more superficial involvement and so came the call to make the faith a little easier.

Important in this was the priest Arius, who proclaimed that Christ had been a good man who had deified his life, but that he was not God himself. So that God had not come down to our world to transform our lives, to get us and bring us back. That meant a belief that has no impact on our daily lives, that we can continue to follow the impulses of this body. The whole idea of purification, enlightenment, divinization went overboard.

The outcome of the council is surprising. The thesis of the very popular Arius was rejected and it became clear once and for all that Christ was fully God and fully man. And that God comes in three ; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three fully God. Not mixed and not separated. And we still believe that.

Now it starts to get a little dizzy with you and so we come to the core of today's message. Who can understand that ; God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit? With our mind, our daily mind, with which we solve so much, that mind cannot reach it. To understand the Holy Trinity we need a different kind of mind, one that is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. It is not for nothing that we pray; “Open our minds so that we can understand the Holy Gospel”. We can only understand faith when we become one with it, when our minds are in the Kingdom of Heaven. The fathers of this council had their minds in Heaven, and they have given us the Creed to lead us to that understanding.

We will have to live the faith; usually that means a cross. Then we are slowly led to that understanding.

Also now we try to adjust the belief, like Arius, so that it fits better in our lives, better with what our ideas are about what is true and what is not, so that it becomes a little more comfortable, so that we can understand it with our limited mind and so that there is more room for our passions.

We will have to gradually internalize the faith and that will not just happen in one day. Each of us has those things in his or her belief that do not agree with the church and that is not a disaster as long as we realize that that is not the faith of the Church and that we will have to let it go in the long run. that we will have to say goodbye to those beliefs. That does not happen by force just as we

cannot be forced to love. God is long-suffering and patient, even with us. It is good to understand that we are on the way to the right faith, orthodoxy.

Then the Gospel reading. The core of what is written here is what the Apostle John writes again and again; the Father and I are one , you see me , then you see the father , I am in the Father , the Father is in me . And ; as the father sent me, so I send you. This gospel reading is called the High Priestly Prayer. What is it like to be a priest? It is receiving God's Grace and passing on that Grace. In the altar the priest stands with his back to the people and with his face to God. He receives the Grace, turns around and passes it on to the people. That is the priestly role. Passing on the Grace. But it doesn't stop there. Christians receive the Grace and make use of it in their lives, by sanctifying their lives, by transcending their nature and by passing it on to others. If we do that we will understand the Holy Trinity, we will understand the Holy Gospel, we will understand the Creed, we will become what God intended.