

Saint Athanasius

b. ? d. 373 - Feastday: May 2

Saint Athanasius, the great champion of the Faith, was born in Alexandria about the year 296, of Christian parents. Educated under the eye of Alexander, later Bishop of his native city, he made great progress in learning and virtue. In 313, Alexander succeeded Achillas in the Patriarchal See, and two years later Saint Athanasius went to the desert to spend some time in retreat with Saint Anthony.

In 319, he became a deacon, and even in this capacity he was called upon to take an active part against the rising heresy of Arius, an ambitious priest of the Alexandrian Church who denied the Divinity of Christ. This was to be the life struggle of Saint Athanasius.

In 325, he assisted his Bishop at the Council of Nicaea, where his influence began to be felt. Five months later, Alexander died. On this deathbed he recommended Saint Athanasius as his successor. In consequence of this, Athanasius was unanimously elected Patriarch in 326.

His refusal to tolerate the Arian heresy was the cause of many trials and persecutions for Saint Athanasius. He spent seventeen of the forty-six years of his episcopate in exile. After a life of virtue and suffering, this intrepid champion of the Catholic Faith, the greatest man of this time, died in peace on May 2, 373. Saint Athanasius was a Bishop and Doctor of the Church.