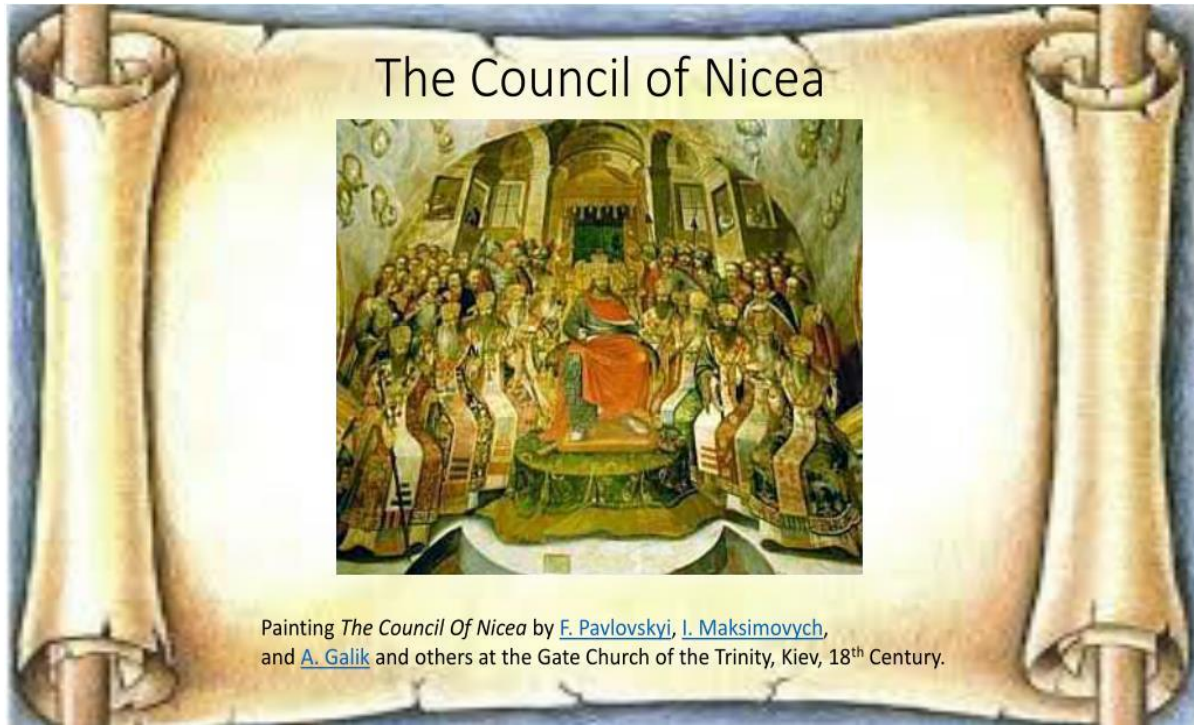


# The CREED and the Council of Nicea

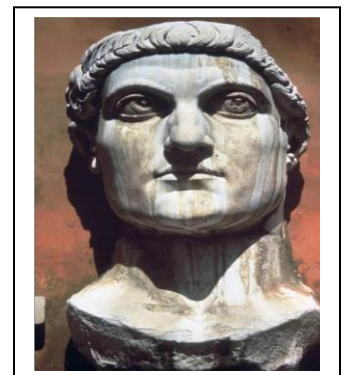


August 25 (this Wednesday) marks the anniversary of the conclusion of the Council of Nicea. What is so important about that Council? Here's the scoop:

The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the Church organized itself 50 days after Jesus' death, on the Day of Pentecost. Most of the early Christians were converts from Judaism, and the Church was centered around Jerusalem. Soon after the founding of the Church, many non-Jews embraced Christianity. These early believers responded to their call to spread the Gospel. Prominent among them was Paul who had previously persecuted the Christians. Paul experienced a conversion to Christianity after he had a life-altering encounter with Jesus on the Road to Damascus. He went out preaching the Gospel and starting up new churches all through the Roman Empire.

PERSECUTIONS of Christians by the Jews and by Roman Emperors began early on in the Church's history. In 64 A.D. the Emperor Nero blamed Christians for a fire that broke out in Rome, one that he probably started himself. This caused many Christians to be tortured and killed. Christianity became illegal. The early 4<sup>th</sup> century Emperor Domitian was likely the fiercest of these persecutors. Anyone who acknowledged being Christian would be a victim of terrible persecution and death.

But then, a turn of events. When Constantine became Emperor, he converted to Christianity. In 313 A.D. he promulgated the Edict of Milan and lifted the ban on Christianity. He wanted unity in his empire and took to fixing the issues that were dividing the Church, issues that were mainly theological disputes. Even though he was not part of the hierarchy, he assumed powers that did not really belong to a non-cleric. One prominent dispute that raged through the Empire was the heresy of Arianism. This heresy held that God

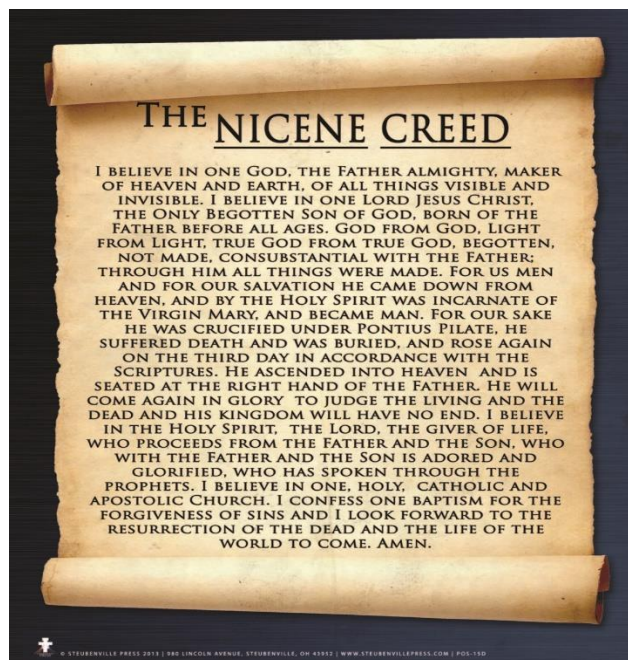


the Son was subordinate to God the Father. In other words, Arians denied the divinity of Jesus. This heresy spread far and wide and drew support from some influential members of the Church. Arius was excommunicated which led to great disunity. So Emperor Constantine panicked and decided to intervene. He convened the first Ecumenical Council which lasted until August 25, 325 A.D. Three hundred bishops plus many priests, deacons and laity were in attendance. The Pope only sent two priests as representatives, but the Emperor Constantine actually ran the Council.



The Council of Nicaea condemned the heresy of Arianism and proclaimed that the Father and the Son are consubstantial in unity with the Holy Spirit. The Council also established the date for Easter and approved the Creed for Church use. It was Constantine who opened and closed the Council amidst the reverence and adulation of the Bishops.

The Creed which emerged from the Council in 325 was formulated to combat the theological heresy of Arianism. It affirmed the rightful teaching of the Church. Later in 381 it was refined and further developed at the First Council of Constantinople. Thus the Creed Catholics recite most Sundays is actually the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. The other Creed that can be used during Lent and the Easter season is the Apostles' Creed because of its nature as a baptismal Creed. In either case, the inclusion of the Creed is for believers to give their assent to the Scriptures that have been proclaimed, the message of the homily, their general loyalty to the doctrines being expressed and to Church teaching as a whole.



This is our faith. This is the Faith of our Church.

We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus Our Lord.