

Trinity Sunday Year “C”  
June 11-12, 2022

“...to heal the eye of the heart...”

Readings: Proverbs 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

Even saints lose their temper. According to a tradition, while attending the church’s first ecumenical Council at Nicaea, Saint Nicholas of Myra—the historical figure behind jolly ‘ole Saint Nick—let’s just say he did not exactly act in the manner for which he is so admired. When confronted with what he believed to be blasphemous views, Bishop Nicholas marched across the council floor and slapped Arius straight across the face! There is even a fresco depicting this scene in a Greek Orthodox monastery nestled in a steep cliff nearly 4000 feet high in northern Turkey.

In truth, that account dates from a “tradition” no earlier than the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Strict historians would consider it a legend— but I am intrigued nonetheless! We need such passion for the truth today! However, it is quite true that the priest Arius was given an opportunity to explain his teaching at the Council of Nicaea, a teaching in which he denied the divinity of Christ. When the Council opened May 20, 325, following a welcoming discourse by Emperor Constantine himself, the sympathizers of Arius spoke first, making their case. The discussions by all accounts, were laborious and long. And it is safe to say, quite intense!

The key moment came when a new term was inserted, borrowed from philosophy, inserting the attribute “consubstantial,” (Gk: *homoousios*) to qualify the unity of the Father and the Son.<sup>1</sup> Scholars are unsure who first suggested that phrase, but we use it each time we recite the Creed. Pay particular attention when reciting the Creed today. Too often, the words slip off our tongues and we do not consider their full impact.

By Council’s end, only the priest Arius and two bishops refused to subscribe to the creed and they were all excommunicated! Still, it was an amazing turn of events, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Technical terms of philosophy or theology, however useful and helpful—as this council demonstrates— are no substitute for the love of God that

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<sup>1</sup> “Nicaea,” entry by Ch. Kannengiesser in the Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity, vol. 2, 909-10.

comes forth from our hearts. St. Augustine summed it up in a sermon when he stated: “Therefore brethren, our whole business in this life is to restore health to the eye of the heart, whereby God may be seen.”<sup>2</sup>

So, I ask you today, “How would you describe the health of the eye of your heart?” Many today do not take the time to think much about God, seeing little value in it. But even those who appreciate the importance of right thinking and sound doctrine, too often fail to attach the same value to the necessity of seeing with the eye of the heart.

God is known precisely in the way He has made himself known to us. Yes, He has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit— but at its core, God revealed Himself as love. And this is how we know Him. Our knowledge of the trinity begins in receptivity, in knowing God in relationship, rather than a puzzle to be solved. An early theologian went so far as to conclude that “God can only be known in devotion.”<sup>3</sup>

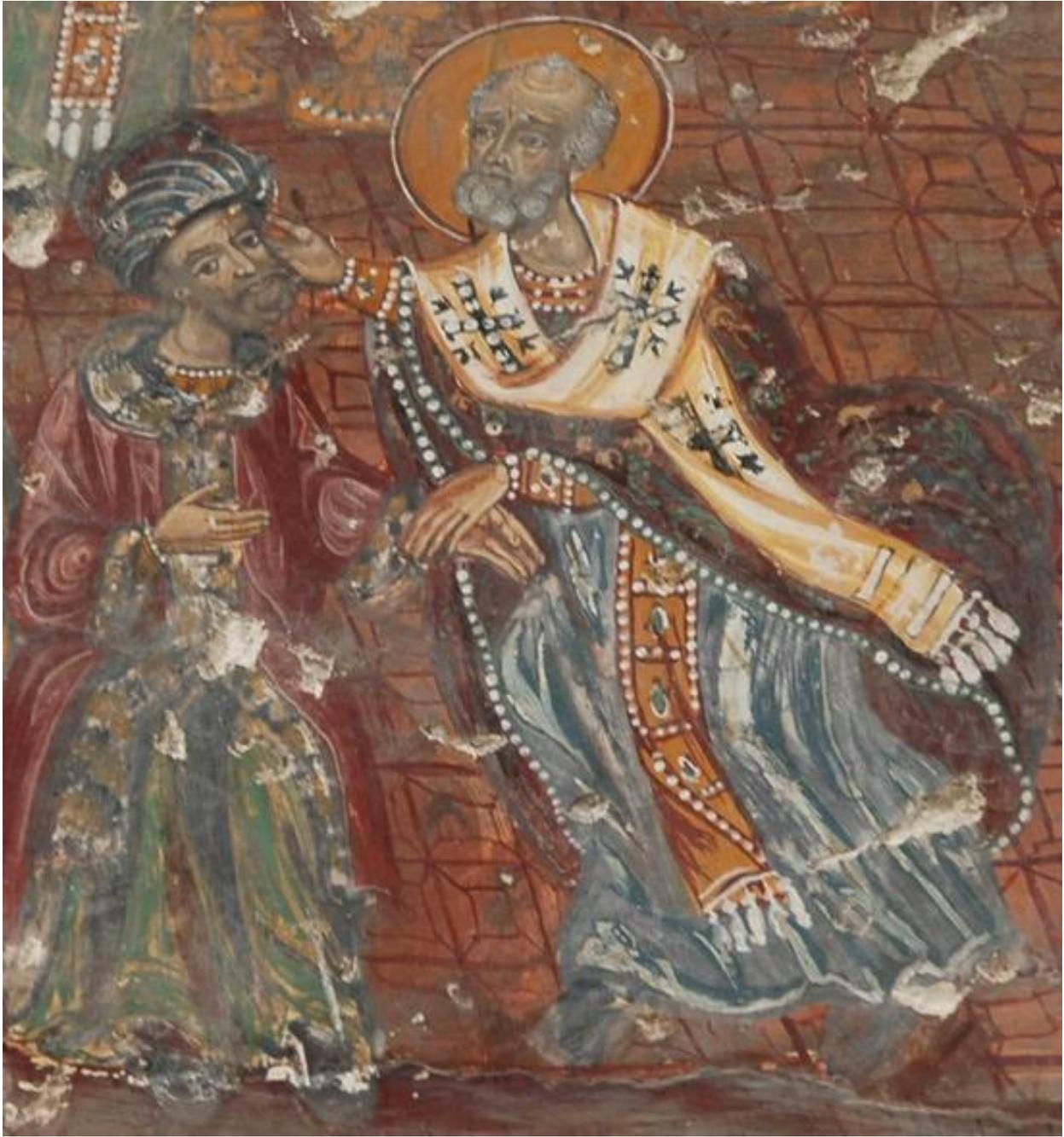
Christ revealed the will of Father through relation. When we hear the word “Father,” it automatically brings forth an idea of a relation—there is no father absent a son or daughter. We know God in our relationship with Him. We do not love an idea, but a person. We seek God’s face, for in loving God we first receive his bountiful love as a pure gift.

God is known so that He may be loved more purely. If our hearts have become lukewarm, Trinity Sunday provides the impetus for growth and change. If the health of the eye of our heart needs some attention, do not delay. Never tire of seeking the face of God every day in the sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity. May God grant us the grace to seek him more intently, not as an idea, but as a Father in loving relationship with us. In so doing, we will continue to find and more importantly, be found.

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<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Sermo* 88.5.5 Tota igitur opera nostra, fratres, in hac vita est, **sanare oculum cordis**, unde videatur Deus.

<sup>3</sup> St. Hilary of Poitiers, “The Trinity” quoted in “Spirit of Early Christian Thought,” by Robert Louis Wilken, page 88.



Soumela Monastery, wall painting, Turkey located at *Karadağ* within the Pontic Mountains, in the Maçka district of Trabzon Province in eastern Turkey, originally founded in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.