

Get **CONNECTED**

with family and friends

Councils, Cultures, and Conflicts

The early Church faced many challenges as it tried to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. There were often disagreements in the Church over certain teachings; and gatherings of Church leaders, or councils, were called to clarify beliefs. In this chapter, you will learn about two early councils of the Church and about Pope Leo the Great, Athanasius, and Augustine of Hippo, courageous men who defended the truths of the faith of the Church.

Activity

Kevin asked his older brother Anthony to help him practice for a debate in history class. Kevin made strong attempts to convince Anthony that President Lincoln alone was responsible for the abolition of slavery. Anthony tried to convince Kevin that many factors helped bring an end to slavery. The boys soon realized they could not settle their disagreement

without doing research, talking to others who knew more than they did, and choosing to work out their differences.

We need to do the same to better understand our Catholic Faith and see how it helps us with our everyday decisions.

Do one of the following.

1. With a family member or friend, discuss a faith issue about which you have some questions. Together, try to discover what our Church teaches so that you can decide on a faithful response.
2. Talk with a friend who has a different faith tradition than yours. Ask your friend to describe the most important beliefs and practices of their religion. Try to appreciate each other's differences while learning what you share in common.



Trivvia

Church History

Social Studies

Arts & Culture

People & Places

Nicaea, once a glorious city within the Byzantine Empire, is known today as Iznik, Turkey. The city, which lies in the basin of a lake, was founded in the fourth century by a Macedonian king.

Quotable Scripture

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures you let me
graze.

—Psalm 23:1–2

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+ Scripture Background

Before the Time of Jesus

The Psalms The Old Testament Book of Psalms contains hymns of praise and thanksgiving and laments of ancient Israel—150 altogether. Written over a long period of time, the Psalms present varying ways of addressing God. Some speak of the God of a single people and place, while others speak of a God of all people. The Psalms describe virtually every aspect of everyday life. The Book of Psalms is truly the common book of prayer of Christians and Jews.

Choose a favorite Psalm to read.

WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

During the Prayer of the Faithful, pray that all Catholics will be faithful to the teachings of the Church.

On the Web

blestarewe.com



Visit our Web site for the saint of the day and the reflection question of the week.

Saint of the Week



Saint Sophronius
(550–639)

Sophronius was a native of Damascus. He lived his last nineteen years in Jerusalem, after Persians had seized the city's holy sites in 614. Just before he died, Sophronius had to negotiate Jerusalem's surrender to the Muslim invaders.

Feast Day: March 11



A Prayer for the Week

Lord, let us be people of courage and peace. Give us willing hearts to do our part to help those in need. Help us treat all people with the dignity and with the respect that you have for people. Amen.

5 Councils, Cultures, and Conflicts



I bless the LORD who counsels me. . . .

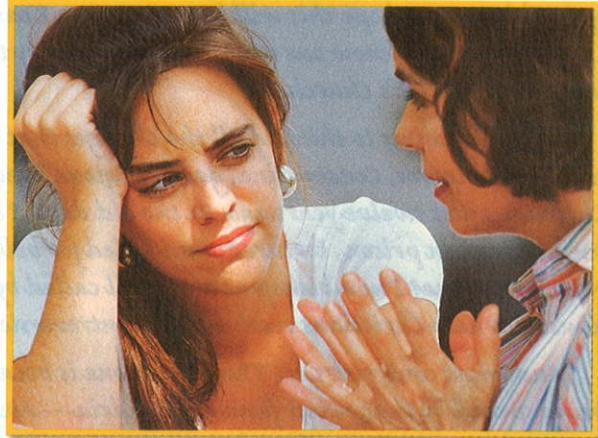
I keep the LORD always before me.

Psalm 16:7, 8

Share

In the fourth century the Church began to have more freedom, thanks to emperors Constantine and Theodosius. No longer did Church members have to fear being persecuted for what they believed. Church leaders could now openly debate theological disagreements that arose in the Church.

By this time, the Church had spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean world and had divided into the Church in the West and the Church in the East. The Western Church was centered in Rome and included the Roman empire's territory in northern Africa. The Eastern Church was centered in Constantinople. During this time leaders in the Church began to resolve their disagreements, and the Church worked to clarify her beliefs about who Jesus Christ was.



Activity

Disagreements happen between people about all sorts of things. Sometimes the disagreements can be about something relatively unimportant, such as which movie to go see. At other times disagreements can be about something very important, such as which person is best suited to be president of the class or of the country!

Think about some disagreements you have had with other people. Then complete the following sentences.

When I have a disagreement about something not too important, I usually handle it by

When I have a disagreement about something I strongly believe in, I usually handle it by

What disagreements created problems for the early Church?





Witness The Council of Nicaea

18 August, the Year of Our Lord 325

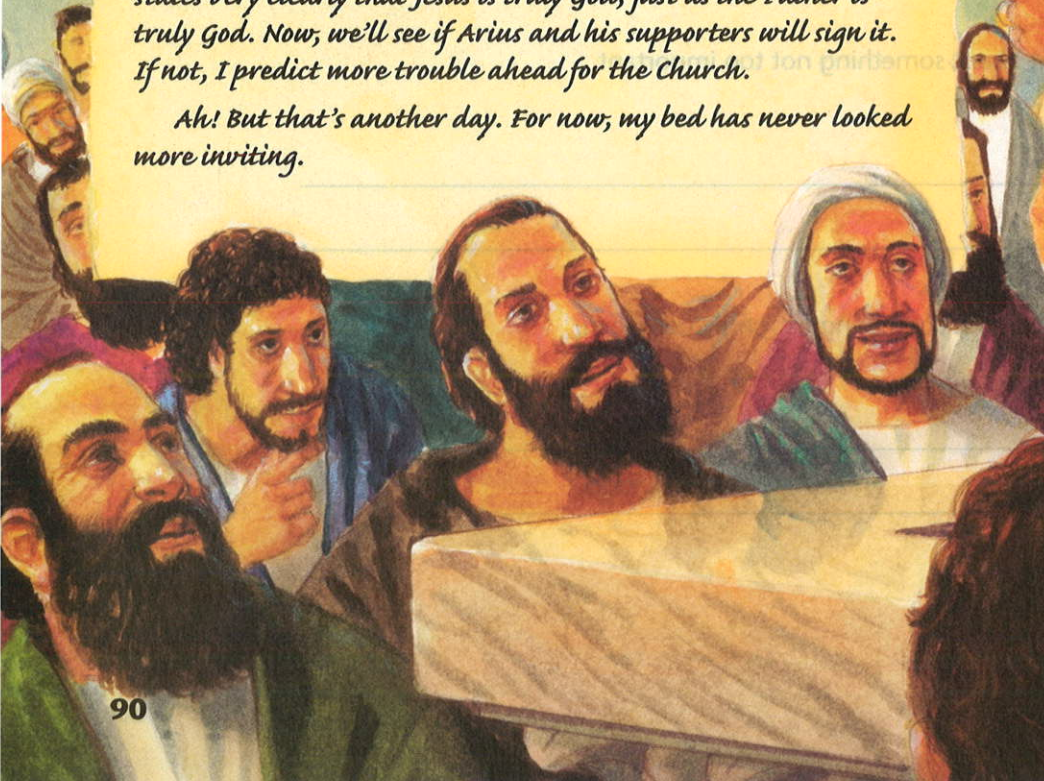
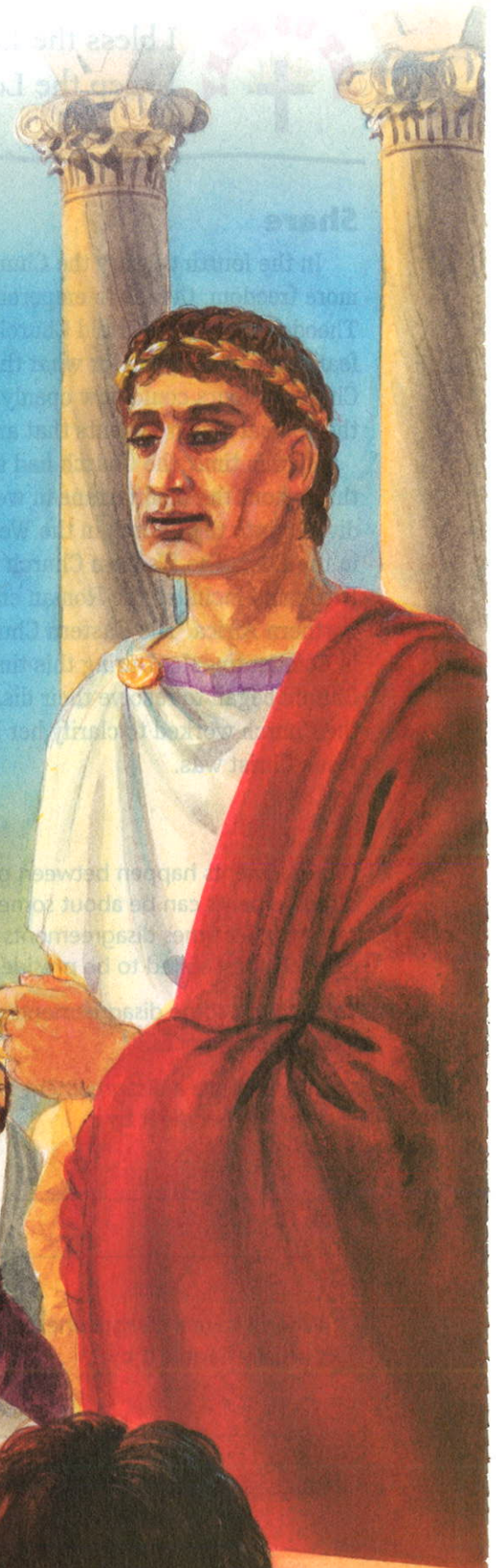
Such a throbbing in my head! Another full day of argument and debate! But every day has been the same since this council opened in May. I hope this will be over soon so I can go home to Libya. And yet, I know our work here is necessary to preserve the integrity of Christ's Church.

My head swims to think of all the changes that have occurred since our emperor, Constantine, gave religious freedom to the Christians just twelve years ago. In the old days, I could have been thrown in prison, tortured, and killed for being a Christian. Now look at me! I'm a bishop at a council called by the emperor himself to help Christians resolve their controversies.

And what controversies! The biggest one is because of a heresy being spread by that priest from Alexandria—Arius. What trouble he's caused. We thought we were rid of him five years ago when we excommunicated him. But did that stop Arius? No! Off he went to Syria and Palestine to spread his heretical ideas. And many bishops, even Ptolemais and Theones from my own homeland, support him. And what does Arius preach? That our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is human, but not divine! And just look at the confusion that is causing. If people start thinking that Jesus is not God, the next thing they'll think is that salvation is not from God. Thanks be to God for that young deacon Athanasius! He's doing a great job debating Arius' ideas.

Well, our work is almost finished. We've written a creed that states very clearly that Jesus is truly God, just as the Father is truly God. Now, we'll see if Arius and his supporters will sign it. If not, I predict more trouble ahead for the Church.

Ah! But that's another day. For now, my bed has never looked more inviting.





A Religious Debate

Emperor Constantine convened, or arranged, the First Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 because conflicting teachings about Jesus Christ were disrupting Christian life. This council was the first **Ecumenical Council** of the Church. More than 200 bishops met, debated, and developed the Nicene Creed, which states that Jesus Christ is “true God from true God.” In the Old Testament, God was called “Lord.” In the Creed, Jesus Christ is called Lord, meaning that he is equal to his Father and therefore divine. As expected, Arius, who had disagreed with this teaching, refused to sign the Creed, and continued to teach the **heresy** called Arianism. The young deacon Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria and argued against Arianism. For a time, the emperors and most of the bishops from Egypt supported Arius, so Athanasius often lived in exile or in hiding. But he bravely continued his defense of the truth of the Church’s teaching about Jesus.

Other Heresies

Other major heresies also attacked the Church in the fourth century, and another champion, Saint Augustine, rose to its defense. One of these heresies denied the goodness of humanity and creation. Augustine argued against this heresy, saying that all that God created is good, including humankind. He taught that Jesus’ birth by the power of the Holy Spirit is proof that the created world is good. Evil, he said, enters the world when people freely turn away from God. Augustine’s writings and sermons helped the Church understand and more clearly define the faith of the Church.

Council of Chalcedon

In the fifth century a heresy claimed that Jesus was divine but not human. The argument became so intense that Pope Leo the Great sent a letter to the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 condemning this heresy. He guided the Council to clearly teach that Jesus was one divine Person who had two natures, a human nature and a divine nature.

Fathers of the Church

During the first centuries of Christianity, the leaders of the Church resolved many theological issues and questions. Holy men, such as Pope Saint Leo the Great, Bishops Saint Athanasius and Saint Augustine, and others, were responsible for clarifying the Church’s teaching about Jesus Christ. Many of these men are honored today as saints and as **Fathers of the Church**.



Activity

Pretend you are at the Council of Nicaea. You have the opportunity to ask a question of Arius, Constantine, or one of the bishops. Of whom would you ask a question? What would you ask, and why?

Who: _____

What: _____

Why: _____




Faith Words

Ecumenical Council An ecumenical council is a worldwide gathering of all the bishops called by the Pope or approved by him.

heresy A heresy is a teaching that is contrary to Church doctrine.

Fathers of the Church Bishops and other writers during the first eight centuries of the Church whose writing helped develop the teachings of the Church are known as the Fathers of the Church.



Where can we find the beliefs of the Church?

Hear & Believe

Scripture Stand Firm

In the first century, after Christ's Death and Resurrection, Christians had to confront people who spread false opinions that were not true to the teachings of Christ and his Apostles. Paul wrote to the Church in Thessalonica warning about the false teaching that Christ's Second Coming and the Final Judgment were at hand. Paul wrote:

"Brothers and sisters do not be lead astray by the false teaching that the day of the Lord will come about very soon. Let no one lead you away from the truth

you have received. God chose you for Salvation through your holiness by the Holy Spirit, your belief in truth, and to possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Stand firm in your faith in the traditions that you were taught either by word of mouth or by a letter of ours."

Based on 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 13-15

A CLOSER LOOK

Saint Augustine of Hippo



Born in A.D. 354, Saint Augustine was one of the most important theologians in the history of the Church. A great preacher and writer, he used his power of logical thinking and passionate love of God to explain and defend Church teachings. As Bishop of Hippo in northern Africa, he steered the Church through a sea of controversy. Augustine understood that when God reveals himself to his people, he remains a mystery beyond words. Augustine wrote, "If you understood him, it would not be God" and "You have made us for yourself; our heart is restless until it rests in you."

Our Church Teaches

As the early Church struggled to proclaim her beliefs, conflicts and heresies arose. Ecumenical Councils were called to teach the faith of the Church. At the First Council of Nicaea, the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote the Nicene Creed. The Creed clearly states that Jesus, the Son of God, truly became man while remaining truly God. "[B]y the power of the Holy Spirit [he] was incarnate of the

Virgin Mary, and became man." Jesus is one divine Person with two natures, human and divine. There is one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Church today continues to proclaim the mystery of God and his love. When conflicts and problems divide the Church, Catholics continue to work toward understanding and unity among all Christians.

We Believe
Jesus Christ is truly
God and truly man.
We worship one God
who is Father, Son,
and Holy Spirit.

Activities

1. How would you stand firm in your beliefs if they were challenged? Read the basic Catholic beliefs stated here. Below each statement, write an explanation of its meaning.

We believe in the Holy Trinity.

We believe that Jesus Christ is God; he became one of us and died for us.

We believe that the Eucharist is Christ's Body and Blood.

We believe in everlasting life.

We believe that God is Creator of all.

We believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

2. The truth that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man is an essential teaching of our Catholic Faith. Identify whether the phrases below describe Jesus' humanity or divinity by writing each on the line below the correct heading.

• Jesus • Gesù • Yé su • Jésus • Jesus • Gesù • Yé su • Jésus • Jesus • Gesù • Yé su • Jesus •

hears our prayers
experienced bodily pain
had parents, relatives, and friends
loves us with an everlasting, perfect love
experienced death

performs miracles and healings
was tempted by sin
saves us from sin
sends the Holy Spirit to help us
felt weak and saddened

JESUS

Truly Human

Truly God

• Jesus • Gesù • Yé su • Jésus • Jesus • Gesù • Yé su • Jésus • Jesus • Gesù • Yé su • Jesus •

How does a Christian stand firm in faith?



Respond

Saint Leo the Great

Pope Leo was the first Pope to earn the title "Great." He served as Pope for twenty-one years from A.D. 440 to A.D. 461. This was a turbulent time in history, when barbarian armies were ravaging the once mighty Roman Empire.

In the years before being elected Pope, Leo served as a deacon of the Church. In 440, while he was on a mission to Gaul to mediate a disagreement between two administrators of the region, a messenger brought him the news that he had been elected Bishop of Rome.

During the time he served the Church as Pope, Leo strived to increase the influence of the Pope. He affirmed that the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, is the successor of Saint Peter, whom Jesus Christ had called "the rock upon which I will build my Church" (based on Matthew 16:18). His teaching that the Bishop of Rome is the leader of all the bishops was important in defining the role of the Pope as head of the Church on earth.

Among the pressing issues of Pope Leo's time was defending the Church against the threat of heresy, especially the false teaching that claimed that Jesus had only one nature and could not be

both human and divine. Pope Leo convened the Council of Chalcedon, where more than 600 bishops gathered. Leo's writings affirmed that Jesus is truly God and truly man, and were read at the gathering. Those gathered at the Council affirmed this teaching to be the true teaching of the Church. Pope Leo also had great influence in political matters. In 452, when Attila the Hun, who had already sacked northern Italian cities and towns, was marching on Rome, Pope Leo headed north to meet him and head off Attila's attack. Leo met Attila at the place where the Po and Mincio rivers meet and persuaded him to spare Rome and to accept tribute, or payment, instead. Three years later when Rome was sacked by another Germanic invader, Leo worked hard to provide aid to suffering citizens and to restore the city. He had churches and basilicas, including St. Peter's, restored.

The Church honors Pope Saint Leo as a Doctor of the Church for all his contributions to defending the faith and building up the Church during a difficult time in history. We celebrate his feast day on November 10.



Illustrated manuscript. Pope Leo I meeting with Attila the Hun persuading him not to attack Rome.

Activities

1. Imagine that you have witnessed the events of Pope Leo's encounter with Attila the Hun. Write an article for *The Rome Times* describing Pope Leo's meeting with Attila. Describe the objective of that meeting, what happened at the meeting, its successful outcome, and what it meant for Rome. Also, be sure to describe for your audience the scene at this event. Give your article a headline.

The Rome Times

2. What are some details of Saint Leo's life that make you admire him? Why do you think Pope Saint Leo earned the title "Great"?

How do we continue today to profess our faith?





Prayer Celebration

The Nicene-Constantinople Creed

Catholics profess their faith at Mass on Sunday. The Creed prayed at Mass is a profession of faith that was developed at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 and finalized at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.

Leader: Let us stand and profess our faith in God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who loves us, created us in his image, made an everlasting Covenant with us, and promises us Salvation.

All: I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(Bow your head during the following two lines.)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate
of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the
forgiveness of sins and I look
forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

5

Chapter Review

- A** Write a brief summary of what you learned in this chapter, using the words in the box.

Eastern Church
Constantine
Arius
heresy
Nicaea
Western Church
Chalcedon
Creed

- B** Match Column A with Column B by writing the correct number in the space provided.

A

- heresy
- Fathers of the Church
- Ecumenical Council

B

- ___ a world gathering of the Pope and all the bishops
- ___ a teaching that is contrary to Church doctrine
- ___ the bishops and other writers in the first eight centuries of the Church whose teachings helped develop Christian doctrine

- C** Write the name of the person described by each clue.

- I became the Bishop of Alexandria and fought against Arianism. _____
- I was the Bishop of Hippo and one of the most influential theologians in the history of the Church. _____
- I sent a letter to the Council of Chalcedon condemning the claim that Jesus Christ was not human. _____
- I told the Thessalonians not to be deceived by false teachings about Christ's Second Coming. _____
- When Attila the Hun was marching on Rome, I headed off his attack.

D Complete the following lines from the Nicene Creed.

1. I believe in one God, the _____ almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
2. I believe in one _____ Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten _____ of God, born of the _____ before all _____.
God from God, Light from Light, true _____ from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the _____.
3. By the _____ _____ was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became _____.
4. He will come again in glory to _____ the living and the dead and his _____ will have no end.
5. I believe in the _____, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the _____ and the Son.

E Respond to the following.

1. Name and describe one of the heresies that challenged the early Church. Tell why this heresy was dangerous to the faith of the Church.

2. Name a conflict that threatens the faith of the Church today. Explain how Catholics can respond to this conflict.
