

# Nicaea: The Anniversary of One Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Faith

This year is the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, the first and greatest of the so-called 'Ecumenical Councils.'

An Ecumenical Council is a meeting of representatives of the entire Church, far and wide, in order to discuss and solve important issues facing the Christ's body. By most counts, there are seven of such Councils, but only the first was strictly speaking 'ecumenical' or 'involving the whole house of Christians.'

In 325 AD, Christian bishops and priests from every place were called to meet in a town in modern day Turkey called Nicaea in order to settle the 'Arian Controversy.' And indeed, representatives from around the known world indeed come. By some accounts, deacons from as far as modern-day Mongolia were in attendance.

The Arian Controversy revolved around a priest from Alexandria in Egypt named Arius who taught that Jesus was not Himself God, but the first and greatest created being. He did this in order to defend what he believed to be a more important doctrine, that of the creation *ex nihilo*, or that God made all things out of nothing.

To Arius, this meant that there could be nothing at all that could exist either alongside, or even within God Himself. God must be absolutely simple, (i.e., He's not made up of parts) and absolutely unapproachable. For him, this meant that Jesus could not be God, because if He were, then there would be at least two 'parts' within God, which begs the question, which 'part' came first? The Father or the Son? Which created which?

This contradicted the doctrine of the Trinity, that God exists eternally in three persons while remaining entirely one, as the Bible teaches and the Church had

believed since the time of the Apostles.

In order to settle this question once and for all, the Council of Nicaea was convened.

After months of discussion and study of the Bible, it was determined that the teaching of Arius was false, and that the doctrine of the Trinity was to be maintained as Scriptural.

As a confession of this 'ecumenical,' 'universal,' 'catholic,' or 'Christian,' faith, the Fathers present at Nicaea composed what would be known as the Nicene Creed: the common, agreed-upon profession of the Triune God, and of Christ, by all Christians present; which we speak together as the Church every Sunday, as the true universal confession of the baptized—*a sound pattern of words*, and a continuation of the faith of Peter who cried out to Jesus, *my Lord and my God!*'