

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

A WORTHY CHAMPION OF OUR FAITH

SAINT ATHANASIUS THE GREAT was born in Alexandria, Egypt, about the year 297. His childhood was spent during the years that Christians were persecuted for their faith. He lived among people and was taught by teachers who suffered for Christ. But by 313, peace came to the Christian community, for Constantine the Great granted religious freedom after his famed vision of The Cross.

Now, however, a different enemy arose, one from within the Church. The heresy of Arius infected the church and caused great troubles. It was young Athanasius, now an Archdeacon and secretary to the aged Patriarch of Alexandria, who arose to defend the faith. He relentlessly challenged Arians on the real issue: “Either admit that the Son is of the same substance with the Father, or say openly that He is a creature, in which case He cannot be worshipped”

The controversy resulted in the calling by the Emperor of the Great Council, held in Nicea. It was Athanasius who led the struggle against the heresy. The Patriarch died shortly after the council, and Athanasius was elected to succeed him. He had a stormy career as Archbishop. The Arian troubles did not fade away but persisted for years. Five times Athanasius was banished; five times he returned in triumph, to the joy of the people.

Athanasius was Archbishop of some 46 years, and he was 77 years old when death came in 373. This warrior for Christ finally received his crown of glory.