

Why I Am Catholic

Great saints and centuries of spiritual heroes.

This week we will celebrate the lives of a number of great saints, but two in particular deserve our attention and admiration.

St. Catherine of Siena (April 29) lived in the 1300s during the time when the Pope was in Avignon, France under the influence of the French king. The Avignon years were 1309-1377. St. Catherine, a laywoman dedicated to the way of life promoted by St. Dominic and the Dominican Order, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to travel from her home in central Italy to southeastern France to convince the Pope to come back to Rome.

Her follow up letter included the following challenge: *"I pray you on behalf of Christ crucified that you be no longer a timorous child, but manly."* She advised him to stop listening to an earthly king and to follow the guidance of Jesus, the King of Kings. A month later the Pope returned to Rome! St. Catherine died at the age of 33 having been a theologian, peacemaker, and reconciler.

St. Athanasius (May 2) is known as the saint who preserved and protected the Nicene Creed (the Creed we say every Sunday). St. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, Egypt for 45 years, was exiled five times by enemies who tried to force him to denounce the core beliefs of the Catholic faith.

He attended the Council of Nicea (325) and then spent the rest of his life defending the Creed against heretical priests and bishops. Yes, against those in Church leadership who could not accept Jesus' humanity and divinity or Church teaching on the Trinity. At the time, Alexandria was one of the five major dioceses of the world and a noted place of religious training and spiritual writing. St. Athanasius led his people by being a man of deep conviction and strong faith.

These are but two of the great saints who have defended and handed on the faith to us: "the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic faith" that goes back to the apostles and to Christ Himself.