Prayer:
Hymn: 622 "God the Almighty One"
Reading: Jude 17-25 and The Creed of Nicaea, 325 A.D.

THE POWER STRUGGLE AT THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE: In his will Constantine had divided his empire among his sons and nephews. But instead of the will being carried out his death was followed by palace intrigue and bloody massacres. According to the will Constantine II, who was twenty-one years of age, was to receive Gaul, Britain, and Spain; Constantius, the second, and who was twenty, was to govern Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt; Constans, who was only fourteen, was to have Italy, Africa, and the upper Danube. A nephew, Caesar Delmatius, was to receive other Danubian provinces down to the Bosphorus; his brother, Hannibal, was to be king of Pontus, reigning the neighboring province of Armenia. Two of Constantine's brothers were murdered: Julius Constantius and Delmatius, the father of Delmatius and Hannibal, the nephews given a place in the will. The two nephews were massacred. Also killed were the patrician Optatus, husband of Anastasia, the sister of Constantine. Two members of the royal family who were spared were the two younger sons of Julius Constantius, Gallus, who was twelve and Julian, who was seven. In April, 340 A.D., war broke out between Constans and Constantine. Constantine was slain and Constans took possession of Spain, Gaul, and Britain. Constantius was emperor of the East and Constans was emperor of the West. From the beginning Constantius was surrounded by the Arian clergy; Constans was favorable to the Nicenes. Before his death Constantine II had given Athanasius and other exiled clergy in Gaul permission to return to their churches. On his way home Athanasius took time to help reinstate the exiled bishops. On November 23, 337 A.D. he reappeared in Alexandria to the great joy of his flock.

THE SECOND EXILE OF ATHANASIUS: The return of Athanasius greatly aroused Eusebius of Constantinople (formerly of Nicomedia) and his Arians. They declared Pistus, the leader of the Arians in Alexandria, to the sole bishop of Alexandria. Pistus had been deposed from the priesthood by Alexander for following Arius. Pope Julius of Rome refused to acknowledge Pistus. A council in Alexandria in 338 affirmed confidence in Athanasius. When Eusebius of Constantinople saw that Pistus was too compromised to be accepted he chose Gregory of Cappadocia and sent him to Alexandria to be bishop. The emperor had to use the army to seat him in March, 339. Arians, pagans, and Jews cheered him but the faithful of Athanasius refused to recognize him. Athanasius, forced out of the city, fled to Rome. Pope Julius held a synod in 340 denouncing the unlawful appointment of Gregory and recognizing Athanasius as the only lawful bishop of Alexandria. The synod also approved other churchmen banished by the Arians, including Marcellus of Ancyra.
THE ARIAN COUNCIL AT THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH:

In the autumn of 341 about one hundred bishops led by Eusebius of Constantinople met at Antioch to dedicate the golden church Constantius had built there. The bishops expressly denied they were followers of Arius, declaring they held the traditional faith. They attempted to state this faith in the first of more than twenty creeds that the Arians would put forth in an effort to replace the Creed of Nicaea. This creed would be known as "The Dedication Creed." It avoided all Arian expressions as well as the Nicene "Homoousian" or "Consubstantial." In fact the creed dodged all the issues and tried to turn the clock back to the situation before the questions had been raised. They affirmed the Only-begotten remains King and God forever.

The bishops put out a shorter version that proved more popular and that came to be known as the only true Creed of Antioch. It is called the "Creed of Lucian" probably because they attributed its leading ideas to the martyr, Lucian, who had been teacher of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Constantinople. This creed affirmed the Son was generated by the Father before all ages, that the Son is truly Son, and that God consists of three hypostases that are one in concord. It was silent on the Nicene term "homoousios".

The ophrônios of Tyana, a member of the council, set forth his own private confession of faith which was approved by the council. It contained anathemas against Marcellus of Ancyra, Sabellius and Paul of Samosata.

A fourth creed of Antioch was carried to Gaul by some of the members of the council, including Maris of Chalcedon. It affirmed the eternity of the Son, the limitless duration of his reign, and condemn those who say the Son is from nothing, or say that he is not God, or that there was time when he was not.

By renouncing the ideas of the first generation of Arians, the Arians were trying to bring East and West together. The luxuriant growth and multiplication of creeds would fail. In the end it would be apparent that one of the failures of the Arians was their failure to produce a creed to replace the Creed of Nicaea. The Arians were better at criticizing and finding fault than in constructing something positive.

The Dedication Council at Antioch was the last for Eusebius of Nicomedia and Constantinople. He died shortly after the council. The Arians never were able to produce leaders like Arius and Eusebius. This was their second great failure--the failure to develop an effective leadership after the first generation.

A second Arian council was held in Antioch in 344/5 that put forth a fifth Antioch creed, commonly called the "Macrostich"--"The Long-winded Creed." It was even more Nicene than the other four. It is sometime called semi-Arian. It contained the affirmation that "the Son is like the Father" (homoiousos).
THE COUNCIL OF SARDICA, 343 A.D.

Pope Julius of Rome felt the times were suitable for a renewal of relations between the churches of East and West and for a fresh examination of the questions at issue, including the orthodoxy of Athanasius. He suggested to Constans that he persuade his brother that a new council should be called. The emperors called the council to meet at Sardica near the boundaries of the two empires. The council met in the autumn of 343 A.D. The Western bishops numbered about ninety and gathered around the aged Hosius of Cordova. Pope Julius was represented by two priest and a deacon. About eighty Eastern or Arian Bishops came. They were led by Stephen of Antioch, Menophantes of Ephesus, Acacius of Caesarea in Palestine, Dianius of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Theodore of Heraclea, and Maris of Chalcedon. Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum were on the Easterner side. The Easterners saw they were clearly out-numbered. They protested the presence of Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra and other bishops that had been deposed by the Arians, since their cases were to be reviewed. The Westerners insisted they had been unjustly deposed. Hosius offered to take Athanasius to Spain if the Easterners did not want him in Alexandria even if the council pronounced him innocent. The Easterners withdrew, held a rump council, setting forth the fourth formula of Antioch with additional anathemas, and slipped out of Sardica by night.

The Westerners examined afresh the cases of Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra and other bishops deposed by the Arians and declared them innocent and unjustly deposed. Then they examined the bishops that Arians had installed in their bishopries, including Gregory of Alexandria and Basil of Ancyra, and declared them heretics. Some of the Westerners proposed a new formula of faith to replace the creed of Nicaea. Hosius of Cordova and Athanasius vigorously opposed the council's adopting a new creed, insisting that there was nothing lacking in the Creed of Nicaea. The council followed their advice. In 361 Arians from Antioch would try to promulgate the creed proposed by the Westerners but failed to get Arians to adopt it. The council of Alexandria in 362 would condemn their action. The Western bishops at Sardica also declared that when a bishop was deposed by emperor or council he could appeal to the bishop of Rome. The bishop of Rome should call a council to review the case and his place could not be filled until the council called by the bishop of Rome had ruled. The Western bishops sent out a letter to all the bishops giving the results of their council calling it "the holy Synod" and by the territories listed as represented indicated it was a synod of the whole church.

The East of course ignored the work of Sardica. The bishop of Rome instead of calling synods to review cases insisted on ruling on the cases himself.

Constantius ordered strict watch at the ports and gates of the cities to prevent any deposed Nicenes from returning secretly to their churches. He began a new reign of terror in the East, deposing Nicene bishops from churches.
THE RESTORATION OF ATHANASIUS:

In 344 the Westerners sent a magister militum with a letter from Constans and two bishops, Vincent of Capua and Euphratas of Cologne, to Antioch requesting that Athanasius be allowed to return to Alexandria. Stephen, bishop of Antioch, planned an abominable outrage: a prostitute was slipped into the house where the bishops were staying to seduce them. The bishops not only resisted but exposed the plot and a synod deposed Stephen and replaced him with a Phrygian, Leontius. Leontius, a pupil of Lucian that Eustathius had refused to ordain, had been even more scandalous in life than in doctrine. His appointment split the Antioch church. Constantius refused to recall Athanasius and other deposed bishops, but he did order an end to the persecution of Athanasius' followers in Egypt.

In 345 a council met in Milan attended by Westerners and Easterners. The Easterners submitted their long profession, the "Macroscopic Ecthesis" which condemned pure Arianism and affirmed the eternal divinity of Christ. They called for the condemnation of Marcellus of Ancyra and his disciple, Photinus of Sirmium, who denied the eternal pre-existence of Christ and the divinity and eternity of his reign. The Westerners offered to condemn Photinus if the Easterners would sign the condemnation of the doctrine of Arius. The Easterners were angered and left the council.

In 345 a Western Council met at Milan. It condemned Photinus and Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa professed the orthodox faith and were restored to communion.

George of Alexandria died in 345 and Constantius invited Athanasius to return to his post in Alexandria. Upon receiving the third invitation from Constantius who was desperate because of disorders in Alexandria, Athanasius returned to Alexandria in October, 346, welcomed triumphantly by his people. In 347 the Arians in a synod at Sirmium condemned Photinus and Athanasius in Alexandria declared that 400 bishops had declared their fellowship with him.

CONSTANTIUS AS SOLE RULER OF THE EMPIRE:

In 350 Count Magnentius and the army overthrew Constans and put him to death and Magnentius became Western emperor. Nepotian, a grandson of Constantine was declared emperor in Rome. Magnentius defeated Nepotian and Constantius in August 353 defeated Magnentius, who then committed suicide. Constantius was sole emperor.

The Arians began putting pressure on Constantius to again send Athanasius into exile, accusing him of having favored Magnentius. At the Second Council of Sirmium in 351 the Arian bishops condemned Photinus after Basil of Ancyra presented the case against him. The Arians put forth a new creed, "The First Creed of Sirmium", a repetition of the fourth formula of Antioch with twenty-seven anathemas added. It was the last of the Arian creeds capable of an orthodox interpretation. After this the Arians returned to open Arianism.
Pope Julius died in April 352 and in May Liberius was chosen to replace him. The Arians tried to get Liberius to condemn Athanasius but he refused. Constantius set up headquarters in Arles in the West. Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum rejoined the Arians, becoming Constantius' advisers. Montanus was sent to Athanasius to inform him the emperor was waiting for him to appear before him. Athanasius asked for a definite summons and began working on his defense. Liberius asked the emperor to call a council at Aquileia. Constantius called a council at Arles in which he demanded that all sign the condemnation of Athanasius or be deposed and exiled. Everybody signed, including the Popes representatives. Paulinus of Treves was the only one who refused. He was deposed and exiled. At councils in Milan in 355 and in Breziers in 356 more bishops were required to condemn Athanasius or lose their places. Hilary of Poitiers was deposed and exiled after an eloquent defense of his faith. Constantius had Pope Liberius arrested and brought before him. He gave him the choice of condemning Athanasius or being exiled. Liberius chose exile. When Hosius of Cordova refused to condemn Athanasius, Constantius had him exiled.

In January 356 the emperor sent his representative into Alexandria to exile Athanasius for the third time. The emperor's soldiers seized the city and put many of the faithful to death. Athanasius was declared a seditious person and enemy of the Emperor. He was exiled to the desert of Egypt and George of Cappadocia, an Arian, was made bishop of Alexandria in February 357. George brought a reign of terror in all Egypt that lasted eighteen months. Finally the people rose in revolt and drove him out. In the desert of Nicaea, the orthodoxy of Origen, and the dangers of Arianism. Here Athanasius gathered material for his famous Life of Anthony. He revised his Apologia to Constantius and wrote his Apologia of Flight—both defenses of Nicaea and attacks on Arianism. He also wrote his History of the Arians.

DIVISION AMONG THE ARIANS:

The Arians had succeeded in sending the leading defenders of the Creed of Nicaea into exile. They had not succeeded in producing a creed to replace Nicaea. The Arians began to split into three camps over formulae to replace the "homoousios" of Nicaea.

Aetius of Antioch became the fanatical exponent of an exaggerated Arianism, called Anomoeanism. He declared that the Son is unlike the Father. They are totally different beings. There was no resemblance between them. Any comparison was injurious. God is Father and Creator. The Son is a creature. At a council at Sirmium in 357 Aetius was victorious. The creed approved is known as the Second Creed of Sirmium and by the orthodox was called "The Blasphemy of Sirmium." It declared that the Father is greater that the Son and it forbade the use of "ousis" in any form, including "homoousios" and "homoiousios". Some more moderate Arians were saying that the substance of the Son was like the substance of the Father (homoousios). The emperor, Constantius, gave his backing to Aetius and his Anomoeanism and Hosius of Cordova and Opopo Liberius were pressured into signing the creed. Eudoxius of Antioch gave strong backing to Aetius and the Anomoeans.
The Anomoean formula aroused great opposition, led by George of Laodicea and Basil of Ancyra. They declared that the Son was like the Father in substance and used "homoiousios" to express this doctrine. They were able to win the emperor Constantius to their formula. At Sirmium in 358 the new imperial orthodoxy was set forth in what is called The Third Formula of Sirmium. Pope Liberius willingly signed this formula. Hilary and Athanasius both felt that "homoiousios" could have the same meaning as "Homoousios". They felt that the substance of the Son could not be like the substance of the Father unless the substance of the Son was the same as the substance of the Father. They wanted the advocates of "homoiousios" to add "in all things"—"The Son is like the Father in all things." Aetius and Eudoxius and the Anomoean bishops were sent into exile. Basil of Ancyra wanted Constantius to call a new universal council. The emperor decided to call a council to meet in Rimini in Italy for the West and one to meet in Seleucia in Isauria for the East.

Mark of Arethusa who was with the emperor at Sirmium was commissioned to prepare a creed to be submitted to the two councils. The new creed is The Fourth Formula of Sirmium. In scorn the Nicenes called "The Dated Creed" because it said "The Catholic Faith was published...on May 22". Ascribing a date to the Catholic faith was ludicrous to Athanasius. This creed declared that the Son is like the Father (homoios). It forbade the use of "ousia" in any form, including "homoousios" and "homoiousios". At the Council of Rimini in the summer of 359 the bishops divided into orthodox and Arians and anathematized each other. The emperor refused to receive the orthodox but warmly welcomed the Arians and had them meet at Nike in Thrace. There the Arians led by Ursacius and Valens gave their backing to the Dated Creed. When Constantius reassembled the bishops he gave them the choice of signing the Dated Creed or be imprisoned.

At the Council of Seleucia in September 359, Silvanus led a group of Arians who proposed the Antiochene Creed of Dedication. Acacius of Caesarea in Palestine proposed the Dated Creed with condemnation of "anamoios" added to it. The bishops refused to draw up a new formula but excommunicated George of Alexandria, Eudoxius of Antioch, Acacius of Caesarea and others and named Annianus bishop of Antioch.

Acacius fled to the emperor at Constantinople and won him to the "Homoios" position. Constantius who wanted to begin his tenth consulate with a proclamation of religious peace called a new council to meet in Constantinople in January, 360. This council approved the Dated Creed with the "Homoios" of Acacius. Leading Anomoeans and Homoiousians were deposed. Aetius was exiled and Basil of Ancyra was deposed. Meletius of chosen bishop of Antioch but was soon deposed and Euzoius was installed. Acacius and his Homoians had triumphed. Jerome later wrote of these times: "The whole earth thus groaned in its surprise at finding it had become Arian."
In victory new failures of the Arians became apparent. The Arians were bitterly divided among themselves. Also the Arians in power alienated many by their tyranny and abuse of power. Their high-handed deposing and exileing of bishops turned more moderate people against them. Homoousians and Homoiousians began drawing together against the Homoians.

THE DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS:
In April of 360 Constantius ordered troops of East and West to join in his war against Persia. The Western troops revolted and chose his cousin, Julian, as Emperor. Constantius died in the Persian War on November 3, 360. Julian entered Constantinople on December 11, 360 as sole emperor and began a return to Paganism. His persecution of Christians was aimed particularly at the Arians. Arians did not make good martyrs. Many returned to paganism to please the emperor. The Nicenes stood firm in their faith. They made better martyrs.

TWO MEN OF THIS PERIOD WHO DESERVE TO BE REMEMBERED:
Ulfila was a Goth who was converted to Arian Christianity. He went back to his people and converted the Goths to Arianism. He developed a written alphabet for the Goths and translated the New Testament into Gothic. From the Goths Arianism spread to other Germanic tribes. When the barbarians invaded the empire they came not only as barbarians but also as Arians determined to replace Catholic and Orthodox Christianity with Arianism. It led to new persecutions and to a revival of the Arian Controversy.

Anthony the father of Monasticism was a devout supporter of the Creed of Nicaea and friend of Athanasius. He spoke out strongly condemning the Arians. The Nicenes feared the Arians would get hold of Anthony and torture him into renouncing the Creed of Nicaea and into signing an Arian Creed. The Nicenes kept Anthony hidded and the Arians were never able to get their hands on him. Anthony died in 356 A.D. honored and loved by those who believe the Creed of Nicaea.