



Roman martyrology: At Antioch, St. Meletius, a bishop, who often suffered exile for the Catholic faith, and finally died at Constantinople and went to his reward. His virtues have been highly extolled by St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nyssa.

PROFILE

Meletius was called to shepherd the Church in the fourth century. The Roman persecutions were over and Constantine had recognized Christianity as a legal religion in 315. What, then, could have made Bishop Meletius' ministry so difficult? Storm clouds had gathered within the Church. Some considered themselves Catholic, some Arian. The Arian heresy denied that Jesus is divine. Some people believed the error because things were not so clear then.

Bishop Meletius loved the Church and was true to Jesus. He believed that Jesus is God and realized that the Church would have to speak up clearly about who Jesus is. Meletius became the bishop of Antioch in 361. The Arians were not pleased. For twenty years, Meletius was a patient, loving bishop. But his life was made difficult by people who did not accept him. He often had to go into hiding because other men were claiming to be the bishop of his diocese. But St. Meletius was the true bishop and would patiently return as soon as possible. When Emperor Valens died in 378, the Arians stopped their persecution.

In 381, the famous Council of Constantinople, a large Church meeting, was called. The bishops wanted to talk about important truths of our faith. Bishop Meletius opened the Church Council meetings and directed the sessions. Then, to the sadness of all the bishops, he died right there at one of the meetings. Great saints like John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa attended his funeral along with all the bishops at the Council. The people of Constantinople poured in to the church as well. St. Gregory of Nyssa delivered the funeral homily. He spoke of a meek, Christ-like bishop whom everyone loved. And he was right: everyone who loved the Church loved St. Meletius.

St. Gregory spoke of Bishop Meletius' calmness and radiant smile, his fatherly voice and gentle touch. St. Meletius died on February 12, 381.

Reflection: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)