

## **Politics, culture and doctrine in the IV century**

- **Politics**

- Edict of Milan (313). Constantine allows the Christian Faith
- The Christian Church has a new life within the Roman Empire, it becomes part of it.
- Christians represent anyway a minority, both in the East and in particular in the West.
- Change of perspective in the relationship between Christianity and Roman culture. No persecutions, peaceful collaboration.

- During the century there are still moments of big tension and recrudescence of the persecutions (ex. emperor Julian).
- Edict of Thessalonica (380). The Emperor Theodosius, together Gratian and Valentinian II, states that the Christian religion must be the official religion of the whole Empire.
- **Culture**
  - Literature and culture adequate to the new climate of collaboration and acceptance after the edict of Milan and then, even more, after the edict of Thessalonica

- Christian authors are more and more inclined to introduce stylistic, methodological and formal characteristics of the pagan culture. Style becomes also important for attracting pagans.
- Awareness of the necessity of including pagan literature and philosophy in the christian intellectual speculation
- Christian authors now speak also to the pagans in a new perspective, far from the old apologetic literature typical of the first three centuries.
- New dignity and importance of the christian literature.
- Importance of rhetoric. Christians now have to celebrate their liturgies and, most importantly, their martyrs, in sermons, hagiography, etc.
- Doctrinal texts for informing the Christian community or for positioning in front of the civil authorities; texts from the councils (canons, letters, decrees, etc.)

- **Doctrine**

- Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451)
- Trinity and Christology.
- Struggle against heresies.
- Nicaea: determinations on Arianism, definition of the Son as *homoousios* with the Father = “of the same essence”.
- Constantinople: confirmation of the statements of Nicaea. The Son is *homoousios*. Condemnation of the doctrine of Aetius and Eunomius, who wanted to define the Son as *homoioousios* (=of a SIMILAR essence and not of the SAME essence with the Father).

- Council of Ephesus: in the same person of Jesus Christ there are two natures: human and divine. The person of Christ is one. Condemnation of Nestorius' doctrine (two persons corresponding to two natures).
- Council of Chalcedon: it is stated that Jesus Christ has two natures, human and divine and these two natures are full and complete. True God and true human being. Condemnation of monophysism (only one divine nature and just the appearance of the human being).
- Other movements: Manichaeism, Pelagianism, Donatism.