

# The Good Word

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## INTERVIEW WITH FR. JIRI JAN



*Fr. Jiri Jan, of the Metropolis of Oropos and Fili, visiting priest at St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. John of Kronstadt Orthodox Church in La Mesa, CA.*

**Interviewer:** We have been very blessed to have had Fr. Jiri (Jan) as a visiting priest for 3 months at our parish at St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. John of Kronstadt Orthodox Church in La Mesa, CA while he was translating his Ph.D. thesis on St. Hilary of Poitiers from its original Czech into English for publication by the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies in Etna, CA.

Evlogeite Father! Could you first tell us a little bit about yourself, your upbringing, and your journey to the Orthodox faith and the priesthood!

**Fr. Jiri:** I was born in 1973 in the former Czechoslovakia, which means I grew up in the Eastern Block in a Communist Society where, because of the continuous persecution, most parents were afraid of attending church with their children. Nevertheless, my grandmother had me baptized as a small child in the Roman Catholic Church. It was my first and last visit in a church until I was 17 years old--the year after the Communist regime fell. At that time strong feelings arose in my heart that something was lacking in my life. So I set off on my personal quest to find the truth. I decided against continuing my technical studies at university, and, instead, entered into theological studies at Charles University in Prague. Considering myself to be without a religious tradition, I not only investigated western Christianity but also philosophy and Eastern religions. Very early in my first year of study I fell in love with ancient Greek philosophy and culture. So I began to study the ancient Greek language and to read Plato. During the study of ancient Greek philosophy I discovered the writings of the Greek Fathers of the Church.

Because of my new acquaintance with writings of Socrates and Plato, my heart began to develop very strict criteria for the truth. Then, whenever I heard about some spiritual leader or great teacher, I would seek him out and discuss the concepts of truth and of Christianity. For example I learned about a very spiritual order of Roman Catholic monks called the Trappists who resided in France, so I went there and met with the abbot of the monastery. I opened my heart to him trying to explain what I sought after. In this case as in many others, I was counseled that what I was looking for doesn't exist in this world--that I was looking for something ideal, perfect--something that we cannot find here in this present life but only in the life to come. All these interactions contributed to my realization that western Christianity wasn't able to quench the thirst in my heart.

I began losing hope that I would discover what my heart was thirsting for. At the same time I continued my study of the Church Fathers. I wrote my first thesis on St. Gregory Palamas and my second on the negative (apophatic) theology of Clement of Alexandria. Through these studies, it dawned on me that if the truth



could be found, it would be found only in Orthodoxy. But after 40 years of communism and then ecumenism, the Czech Orthodox Church was not the place where I could experience the real treasures and essence of Orthodoxy. Although I was satisfied intellectually by studying the Greek Church fathers and Orthodox theology, it wasn't enough to fill my aching heart. I didn't want to just read about God, I wanted to experience Him and to participate in His life! After 10 years of fruitless searching, I started feeling depressed and was losing hope that I would ever find that "living water" that I was looking for.

Then I met a monk from Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, NY, who had returned to Czechoslovakia after the fall of the communist regime and had become a teacher in the university. He understood how desperate I was, and told me about the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Greece. So I decided to take one last trip to find peace and fulfillment for my heart.



*Monastery of Sts. Cyprian & Justina, Fili, Attica, Greece.*

So I went to Greece for a month to visit this monastery where I was warmly welcomed by our Metropolitan Cyprian of blessed memory. This meeting became the turning point of my life: the end of my searching for the Truth. There, in Greece in our Monastery I found what my heart was looking for--that which all those people in the West told me didn't exist in this fallen world. I felt as if I was living in the heavens! What I had found in the True Orthodox faith was much more than what I could ever have imagined, and so I was baptized by our Metropolitan. He recommended that I finish my university studies, finish my doctoral thesis, and become a priest. Being my brand new spiritual father, I obeyed him.

**Interviewer:** Please tell us about your family and your parish in Patra, Greece.

**Fr. Jiri:** I met my Presbytera Clara during my studies in Prague before I became Orthodox. She came from a very pious protestant family and had entered the

theological school to become a pastor of the church. She followed my journey attentively and also became interested in Orthodoxy. Just before I left for Greece she discovered the great Serbian Orthodox theologian Justin Popovitch. Reading one of his books she understood that she was outside the Church and decided to become Orthodox. Coming with me to Greece she was also baptized and agreed to become a presbytera. After I finished my studies we moved from Prague to Greece where we have lived for the past 8 years. We have 3 children Phillip 11 years old, George 9 years old, and Justin just 3 1/2 years old.

We currently live close to Athens. On weekdays I serve as a priest for the visitors who come to the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, a very popular destination for pilgrims in Greece. On the weekends I travel to our parish in Patra, the 4th largest city in Greece, a 3 hour drive from Athens. On Saturdays in Patra we have vespers and confession, and on Sunday morning Orthros (Matins) and Liturgy, returning to Athens late in the afternoon.

I am very blessed to have a parish in this apostolic city of Patra (in the northwest Peloponnese), which is known as the "city of St. Andrew" since St. Andrew established Patra's first Church.




*Ascension of the Savior Orthodox Church, Patra, Anthoupolis, Greece*

After the union of the former Synod in Resistance with the GOC we now have 3 GOC churches and one convent in Patra. Our hilltop church is dedicated to the Feast of the Ascension of the Savior. The parish is small but very spiritually active with 50-70 people, including energetic young and middle-aged adults and lots of children. After liturgy we normally have a coffee hour followed by a parish meeting. For the latter I usually prepare a special lesson followed by an open discussion with the parishioners.

**Interviewer:** What do you see as the biggest challenges for your parish?

**Fr. Jiri:** One of the things I discovered after I became the priest, and we have to acknowledge it, is a real absence of a living theology of marriage in our



Church. Most of the books dedicated to the spiritual life in Greece are written by and for monastics. But there are many married Greeks who aren't satisfied with an average level of spiritual life and long for a deeper and more intense life in Christ which they could incorporate into their everyday life. As one can imagine, it is not all that easy to adapt the monastic experience to family life here in the beginning of the 21st century. Unfortunately, we, the Greek people, have also adapted a more [Roman] Catholic or Western concept of marriage which is really quite different from the exalted Orthodox vision of marriage. Consequently, the value of church marriage has been diminished in the minds of many. So there is an obvious need to rediscover the hidden treasure of Orthodox marriage. Let me mention in this context that our Greek youth, who have been growing up in this "post-Christian world" of Western Europe with its steady attack on the institution of family, aren't so willing to marry. So our clerics need to be instructed how to present a true Orthodox vision of family and married life.

**Interviewer:** How has the current fiscal crisis in Greece affected you and your parishioners in Patra?

**Fr. Jiri:** The situation is catastrophic, its impact tremendous. It started about 5 years ago. In the monastery at that time I would usually give material help to 5 or 10 people a day. When the crisis started, these numbers rapidly increased more than 10 or 15 fold. We had to ask lay people to help us with the overwhelming needs, carrying bags of food to the needy for example.<sup>1</sup> But there is a good side to this crisis--a segment of Greek society is turning back to the Church.

**Interviewer:** As Traditional Orthodox how are you currently viewed and treated by the new calendarist state church?

**Fr. Jiri:** The last wave of persecutions of the Old Calendar Churches was in the 1950s. Since then we have been tolerated by the government. They accept our baptism and marriage certificates, but only by their good will, because the Greek Constitution recognizes only one Church, i.e., the new calendar State Orthodox Church. However, the European Parliament has pushed the Greek government to cancel this concept of the State Church and allow other religious organizations to be accepted under Greek law.

So, our relationship with the state new calendar church is a bit complex. There are those "night disciples", i.e., those who come to us at night like Nikodemus did to Jesus. Secondly, there is a part of the state Church composed of conservative new

calendarists who have great esteem for us, support us, and see us as their last hope. But there is another part of the conservative new calendarists who don't like us at all. To justify their continued communion with the ecumenists despite the latter's ever-deepening apostasy they misrepresent our walling ourselves off from the ecumenist new calendarist Church, as having fallen away from what they consider to be the true Church. Then there is the luke-warm part of the state church that isn't interested in us at all. Last of all, there definitely are fanatical new calendarists who see us as heretics and openly reject our mysteries. But generally in Greece, it is hard to find fanatical ecumenists except among hierarchs, intellectuals, and academic theologians. You generally do not find them among the monks or the common people. At the same time, we are saddened to see the ongoing spiritual decline in the state orthodox church. Most of the people who come to visit our monastery are not interested in ecumenism. But one thing they do know is that when they face real problems in their lives they can find the true spiritual help they need at our monastery.



**Interviewer:** Let's focus now on your Ph.D. thesis on the 4th century Latin Father St. Hilary of Poitiers. St. Hilary is not a well known saint to many Orthodox Christians. We know that he was from a city in Roman Gaul. A few may be aware of his treatise *De Trinitate* against the theology of the Arians, fewer still of his *Commentary on Matthew*. Give us a little background on St. Hilary and the world he lived in.

**Fr. Jiri:** The problem is that we do not know much about the life of St. Hilary. We do know that he was born at the beginning of the 4th century in the city of Poitiers, in Aquitania, one of the 4 Roman provinces in Gaul. We are not sure whether he came from a pagan or Christian family, but it was a leading family, who provided him with an excellent education. In the beginning of his book *De Trinitate* Hilary describes his pursuit of the truth as if it were a journey from pagan society to Christian belief. According to one testimony, he was baptized as an adult after he discovered Christianity because of a compulsive thirst for the truth. What is very characteristic of St. Hilary is the great appreciation he had for the immense value God placed in humanity. In the beginning of the first part of *De Trinitate* he states that not to participate in the truth is unworthy of humanity. "*We have to become worthy of the gift of divine understanding which we were given.*" He was also very concerned about the conquest of

1. See page 8: "Notices" for information on donations to Greece



mortality. What captivated him about Christianity was the idea that Christ was the “*Conquerer of death*,” and that Christ abandoned His immortality to become mortal in order to bestow on us His immortality. Thus, he understood Christianity as the quest for deification.



St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers AD 350-368, celebrated Jan 13.

**Interviewer:** Once he was ordained circa AD 350, what were the challenges that St. Hilary faced as Bishop of Poitiers in the Western Roman Empire?

**Fr. Jiri:** One of the main challenges that St. Hilary faced as Bishop of Poitiers was combating heretics that had arisen in Gaul. Secondly, he needed to define the essence of Christianity for missionary outreach to the pagans in Gaul and to better educate his flock. The essence of salvation, as he understood it, is deification in Christ. But how do we know this? We are very blessed in having St. Hilary’s *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, previously available only in Latin or French, but now available in an English translation.<sup>2</sup> It is a very important work for the history of theology, because we are very sure that it was written before St. Hilary became acquainted with eastern theology. In it we are given a very good view of western theology

before its meeting with eastern theology as a result of the Arian crisis. St. Hilary wrote his *Commentary* for presenting Christianity to the pagan Roman world in Gaul, as well as for combating heretics, whom he described but didn’t name. My own studies have allowed me to realize that these heretics were the western precursors of Arian teaching. He quickly understood that these (Arian) teachings posed a threat to the essence of Christianity. But in what way? In one place he wrote that the essence of the teaching of these heretics was to try to deny the divinity of Christ through Whom God came down to man so that man could become god. St. Hilary’s vision of Orthodox salvation, i.e., deification through Christ’s incarnation, was diametrically opposed to the teaching of these heretics, who, by denying the divinity of Christ, destroyed that singular possibility of salvation through deification.


**Interviewer:** What was the political climate like in Gaul at that time?

Let me give a little historical framework to provide the background for the political and spiritual crisis that was occurring. In AD 351 the battle of Mursa took place to the northeast of Italy between the Emperor Constantius II and the usurper Magnentius whom he forced to retreat to northern Italy, and later to Gaul. Two years later Constantius invaded Gaul, and overcame Magnentius, becoming sole ruler of the Roman Empire, which was united politically, but not ecclesiastically. Why? Because the Church was divided between Arians and Orthodox. The process of ecclesiastical unification began shortly thereafter in AD 353 when Constantius wintered over in Gaul with 3 Arian bishops Ursacius, Valens, and Saturninus, [all disciples of Arius during his exile 30 years earlier]. Thus Constantius’ first attempt to unify the Church, through the Synod of Arles in AD 353, reflected the Arian influence of these 3 bishops who opposed the Orthodoxy of St. Athanasius the Great. Two years later at the Synod of Milan persecutions began when 3 anti-Arian Orthodox bishops were exiled: St. Dionysius of Milan, Eusebius of Vercelli, and Lucifer of Cagliari. St. Hilary then became the *de facto* leader of the anti-Arian opposition in Gaul. In AD 356 a small Synod in Beziers was convened which St. Hilary was forced to attend. It was presided over by the Arian archbishop Saturninus. St. Hilary was found guilty of “disloyalty to the Emperor” and was consequently exiled to Asia Minor.

**Interviewer:** How much did the simpler theological Latin language of the Orthodox bishops in the West impede their ability to understand what the Arian heresy was and to fight against it?

**Fr. Jiri:** Yes, the Latin language was simpler and

2. St. Hilary of Poitiers (D.H. Williams, translator), *Commentary on Matthew* (Fathers of the Church Patristic Series, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 2012, pp. 317.



much less able to communicate the subtleties of Greek in regard to the mysteries of the Christian faith. But, here again we see the importance of St. Hilary's *Commentary on Matthew*, which was a pure product of western theology in Latin.

We also have to take into account who St. Hilary's teachers were. He mentioned Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage by name. Let's not forget that St. Hilary grew up the Gallic Church highly influenced by the theology of St. Irenaeus of Lyons. And even though the average level of understanding of the Christian populace was higher in the east, there were those in the west with a comparable level of understanding, such as St. Hilary.

Interestingly, St. Hilary wrote his *Commentary on Matthew* before he learned about Arianism, before he knew about the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed. Yet in combating these unnamed heretics in Gaul, through the influence of Tertullian he understood that we have to secure Christ's divinity with the word *unius substantiae*<sup>3</sup> --it's "ὁμοούσιος"<sup>4</sup>. Later on he wrote, "Even before I was exiled, before I was acquainted with the Nicene Creed, the Bible taught me *unius substantiae*."

**Interviewer:** Given his own deep theological understanding, what advantage did St. Hilary gain from being exposed to Eastern Orthodox theology after being exiled to Asia Minor?

**Fr. Jiri:** St. Hilary was given a lot of freedom to travel in Asia Minor. He began to study Greek theology, especially Origen's writings, which at the time were seen as the summit of theology. There he wrote the *Exposition of the Book of Job* and the *Explanation of the Psalms* both of which showed Origen's influence.

Another advantage of being exiled was St. Hilary's association with the movement of Asia Minor bishops called homoiousians. They were bishops who opposed the word *ὁμοούσιος* (*homoousios* being of the same substance), preferring the term *ὁμοιούσιος* (*homoiousios* being of a similar substance). Let us note that they were not semi-Arians, but still part of the Orthodox world. Why did they not accept the term *homoousios*? One of the main proponents of this key term in the Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea was Marcellus of Ancyra, who, however, interpreted this word in a heretical fashion, as a kind of monarchianism<sup>5</sup> after the fashion of Paul of Samosata who was condemned in the council of AD 268 in Antioch.

So these *homoioosian* bishops grew up in Asia

3. Literally, *of one substance*, a term coined by Tertullian

4. *Homoousios*, of the same substance or essence, used in the Nicene Creed

5. Monarchianism is a set of beliefs that emphasize God as being one person.

Minor studying Origen. One of the advantages of Origen was his clear emphasis that there are two separate *hypostases*: of God the Father, and of God the Son. So the Origenist theology provided these bishops with very good tools for combating monarchianism. We should also note that before Arianism came to power the main heresy was monarchianism. Indeed, St. Dionysius the Great, Pope of Alexandria (AD 248-264) stated that monarchianism almost destroyed Christianity in Africa. So before the heresy of Arianism, the Church was very concerned with monarchianism.

During his exile St. Hilary could carefully study the theology of these Orthodox opponents of the term *homoousios* which enabled him to play the very important role of mediator. To the western supporters of the *homoousios* he explained that the eastern *homoiousians* are not Arians but Orthodox. To the eastern homoiousians he clarified that the western bishops do not interpret *homoousios* in a monarchianist way and that they are truly Orthodox. St. Hilary at that time was probably the only one who could bridge the gap between these two sides. Indeed, by AD 360, through a Synod in Paris, all the Gallic Church was in communion with the eastern homoiousians.


**Interviewer:** After this great diplomatic conciliar success of St. Hilary, we find him being exiled back to Gaul. What happened?

**Fr. Jiri:** The Arian imperial bishops succeeded in uniting the Church on an Arian basis--a great political victory, which shocked St. Hilary and the homoiousian bishops in the east. In AD 359 the Emperor called for a double Synod, at Rimini in the west and in Seleucia in the east. St. Hilary's plan was to use his *De Synodis* to unite the homoiousians with the bishops of Egypt, who used the *homoousios*, and with the bishops of the west. However, the Arian bishops succeeded in uniting most of the participants on an Arian basis through bribes and political intrigue. They presented the Emperor with a potentially united Church and recommended exile for anyone who failed to sign and comply with the agreement.

St. Hilary then realized that the reason for the victory of the Arians over the Orthodox was really the siding of the emperor with the Arians. This compelled him to write the blistering *De Trinitate* against the Emperor's support of Arianism which brought about his immediate exile back to Gaul as a kind of trouble maker and destroyer of the agreement.



**Interviewer:** Could you now tell us about your



doctoral thesis, why you chose St. Hilary of Poitiers and what you focused on?

**Fr. Jiri:** First of all, St. Hilary's Latin teaching about salvation as a deification is very important. It was the main reason for me choosing his theology as the topic for my doctoral dissertation. In the first part I dealt with the earlier work, the *Commentary on Matthew*, and in the second part with *De Trinitate*.

One of my aims was to observe and find out if and how much his theology changed after he became acquainted with eastern theology. Through these studies I discovered a very important feature of the theology of St. Hilary. As you know most of the historians of Christianity and Christian dogma (to the point of it being a cliché) believe that the high vision of the deification of human nature was the contribution of eastern theology to Christianity, that it was not a common idea in the Latin west. The *Commentary* of St. Hilary, written before he became acquainted with eastern theology, disproves this. The idea of the deification of human nature through the incarnation of Christ is present in nascent form in the *Commentary* albeit not as fully developed as it is in *De Trinitate*.

In his *Commentary* he writes that through the incarnation of Christ, God came to man so that man can become "in God." In presenting the main work of the Church of the apostles and their followers, he calls them the source of eternity and immortality for our flesh, and that our destiny is to become the dwelling place of the living God. And, of course, in *De Trinitate* he labored much more extensively over this idea of the deification of the human person. So the message of the Orthodox Church that St. Hilary championed was that Christ opened to us the unending process of deification, the unending progress of men toward God.

**Interviewer:** Besides deification, what other important theological ideas did St. Hilary delve into?

**Fr. Jiri:** I think that St. Hilary is very important for us in that he elaborated fundamental Orthodox theological concepts in the Latin west that were once thought to be the sole contributions of eastern theology. For example, we have every right to define the difference between God's nature and God's energies as a basic axiom in patristic theology. Often it has been claimed that this concept is the much later invention of St. Maximos the Confessor or St. Gregory of Palamas, and that it was confined to the eastern tradition. However, St. Hilary proves that it wasn't solely an eastern contribution because he dealt with this concept already in the *Commentary on Matthew*, i.e., before his contact with eastern theologians. Not only did he deal with it, but it became a most essential tool for St. Hilary

in his combat against Arianism. Without this distinction between God's nature and His energies, he couldn't explain the difference between God's begetting of the Son and the God's creating of the world. We don't have time to explain it here, but let us say that the distinction that St. Hilary makes between God's energies and His nature in His *natura*<sup>6</sup> and His *virtus*<sup>7</sup> is the basis of his theology.

**Interviewer:** What was St Hilary's influence on his contemporaries?

**Fr. Jiri:** St. Hilary is one of most overlooked fathers of the Church for a couple of reasons. First, he wrote his work in very complicated Latin because his thinking is so deep and expression very rich. Rather than being the type of scholastic theologian who would use strictly defined terms, he was more of a theological poet witnessing to his own personal experiences with God. Indeed, he was one of the first Church Fathers in the west to compose poetic hymns.

In the centuries that followed, the legacy of St. Augustine prevailed over St. Hilary in the west. Although St. Augustine had great esteem for St. Hilary, nevertheless, there was a gap between their respective theologies. During the centuries following the death of St. Augustine the Latin Christians decided to make him the sole criterion of Christianity in the west. So it happened that, whenever St. Hilary's theological legacy didn't meet this criterion, it was rejected, overlooked, and ignored

On the other hand his treatises were never translated into Greek. So the Latins who could read him didn't understand him, and the easterners who could understand him didn't have any access to his works. Consequently, he was again overlooked. However, his orthodoxy in Latin was never in question. After all, he had saved the western Church from Arianism.

**Interviewer:** How should we define the place of St. Hilary in western tradition?


**Fr. Jiri:** The ambiguous approach of the West toward his theology can be demonstrated through the case of scholastic theology. On the one hand St. Hilary was always venerated as the Athanasius of western theology, as the one who defended the catholic faith against the Arians. On the other hand some of his theological concepts sounded so strange to the ears of scholastic theologians that they had a most difficult time trying to harmonize it with the standards of the scholastic tradition. One of the great scholastic theologians, Peter Lombard (AD 1100-1160), author of one of the foremost basic textbooks of Latin theology:

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<sup>6</sup> *natura* = "nature"

<sup>7</sup> *virtus* = "moral excellence, virtue"





the *Libri Quatuor Sententiarum*,<sup>8</sup> dedicated one section to St. Hilary's ideas entitling it "About Obscurities and Darkness." Again St. Hilary's orthodoxy was never doubted since he had saved the western church, but at the same time Peter Lombard considered it his duty to warn his readers that they be extremely careful when reading St. Hilary. Why? If they weren't careful, his books could become a cup of poison for them!

So because of these linguistic issues and the inability to harmonize his theology with the scholastic tradition in the west, he became unknown, unevaluated, and unappreciated. Only in the 20th century there was there an attempted revival of St. Hilary's legacy. Despite all the western Protestant and Catholic theologians who studied and wrote many volumes on St. Hilary, and despite the fact that they approached him with great sympathy, it is obvious that their basic hermeneutic keys are very different from those which one has to have and use when dealing with this great Church Father. But in the pre-revolutionary Russian near the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, Ivan Vasilevich Popov (1867-1938), a professor of the Moscow Theological Academy (canonized as a new martyr in 2003) published a unique study of St. Hilary's theology (available only in Russian)<sup>9</sup> from which I benefitted immensely.



**Interviewer:** What practical value does St. Hilary have for us Orthodox Christians in the 21st century?

**Fr. Jiri:** St. Hilary understood that his duty as a bishop was to preserve the revealed Truth of Christian faith which means to combat heresy. He understood that there is a link between Church truth and salvation, and he was willing to pay any price in order to remain faithful to the teachings of the Church.

At this point I would like to highlight another side of St. Hilary, and that is his epistemology/gnoseology<sup>10</sup> It is important that we understand his theory of knowledge for our own combat against heresy. St. Hilary had a very deep insight into the essence of heresy and the preconditions for finding the truth of the Church. His first axiom states that whatever is

imperfect cannot know, understand, obtain, or encompass that which is perfect. Starting from this axiom, there are two ways of trying to resolve this axiom.

The first way is the way of the heretics. They say, "Ok, we understand that we are imperfect and God is perfect. So to get to know Him we have to pull Him down to our level and to enclose the perfect God within the borders of our created imperfect nature and understanding." In other words this is the way of making Christianity more logical and more understandable to our comprehension. So, instead of being obedient to God, they become God's judge. For example they reject the idea that God became a man. Why? Because they "know" that it is impossible for God to become a man. It just couldn't have happened. Consequently, the heretics don't observe or know God, but observe their own idea that they substituted for Him.

The Orthodox way of resolving the axiom, instead of adjusting God to human nature and understanding, calls us to adjust our understanding to God's perfection and perfect understanding. This applies not only to knowing God, but also to the salvation and deification that God calls us. St. Hilary states that through the process of regeneration and illumination we are called to widen our perception according to God's perception. We are called to become god in order to know God. God is the only suitable witness of Himself and can only be found through Himself. So we have to purify ourselves in order to become the dwelling place of God so that we can come to truly know God. This is the only way to know God both today and in ages past! This is the Orthodox way! Then we can become effective witnesses to His truth in our modern secular and sinful world.

In his combat with the heretics--St. Hilary was an example of moderation. In his time there was a clash in the west between the moderate Orthodox bishops and the "hardliners" who were represented by Lucifer of Cagliari. Although a lot of western bishops had been temporarily deceived by the Arians, once St. Hilary explained the Arian error and deceit to them, they were eager to repent of their errors and to accept and sign the Nicene creed. Once this was done, Hilary accepted them immediately back into communion as bishops. However, Lucifer and the hardliners refused to accept them back as bishops, but only as laymen. So St. Hilary, having already broken communion with those bishops who remained Arian, also broke communion

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8. *The Four Books of Sentences*

9. <http://predanie.ru/popov-ivan-vasilevich-muchenik/book/216761-ilariy-episkop-piktavijskiy/> use Google Chrome web browser then convert from Russian to English.

10. *Epistemology* is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion. *Gnoseology* is the philosophic theory of knowledge, classical *gnoseology* is also seen as the metaphysical theory of knowledge



**THE GOOD WORD**

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with those Orthodox bishops who took the hardliner position of Lucifer toward those bishops who repented. I believe this moderate position of St. Hilary is very important for us today.

It is also interesting that today, we don't know what the original title of *De Trinitate* was. It is notable that St. Hilary kept to one strict rule in his writing--he never mentioned the names of those heretics against whom he was writing. Only twice in the treatise was the name of Arius even mentioned. He was so concerned with his work of being a peacemaker that he coined nicknames for the heretics, e.g., those who thought Christ was only a man he called "Ebionites," after that sect from the early Church times [who accepted Jesus as the Messiah but denied his divinity]. So by using these nicknames, it is not so easy to determine exactly whom he is writing about. Why did he do this? St. Hilary, from his own experience, already knew how many divisions were caused not by the real differences in dogmatic teachings but by their interpretations.



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