May 2nd: Memorial of Saint Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Gospel text (*Mt* 10,22-25a): Jesus said to his disciples, «Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next (...)».

St. Athanasius, bishop and doctor of the Church (c. 300-373)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today we celebrate St. Athanasius (Alexandria), one of the most important Fathers of the Church; he was above all the impassioned theologian of the Incarnation of the Logos, the Word of God who «became flesh and dwelt among us» (Jn 1:14). For this very reason Athanasius was also the most important and tenacious adversary of the Arian heresy, which at that time threatened faith in Christ, reduced to a creature "halfway" between God and man.

As a youngster he joined the Council of Nicaea (325), the first one of the Ecumenical Councils. The Bishops gathered in Nicaea responded by establishing the “Symbol of faith” [“Creed”] which, completed later at the First Council of Constantinople. In this fundamental text the Greek term “homooúsios” is featured, in Latin “consubstantialis”: it means that the Son, the Logos, is “of the same substance” as the Father, he is God of God. Thus, the full divinity of the Son was brought into the limelight. At least five times Athanasius was obliged to abandon his city (exiled). But he was able to sustain and to spread the Nicene faith as well as the ideals of monasticism, embraced in Egypt by the great hermit, Anthony.

—The Word of God «was made man so that we might be made God; and he manifested himself through a body so that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and he endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality» (St. Athanasius).