January 13th: St. Hilary of Poitiers, bishop and doctor of the Church

Gospel text (*Mt* 5:13-19): Jesus said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

“You are the light of the world”

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Today, we lift our souls in adoration to the One who is the source of all wisdom. Indeed, we wish to express our gratitude for the wise man He has inspired to mature our faith. We celebrate one such beacon from antiquity: Saint Hilary of Poitiers, bishop, known as the "Athanasius of the West." As the hymn "Aeterne Sol" proclaims, "this blessed man, another in the choir of Doctors, is distinguished by his clarity of doctrine."

Saint Hilary is noted for his defense and affirmation of the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, staunchly opposing the Arians who denied this truth of faith. This matter is fundamental because if Christ is not God, then what benefit is His sacrifice on the Cross to us? If He is not God, what do we receive in the Eucharist? If He is not God, who guarantees the resurrection for me? In the end, if Jesus is not God — fully and truly — then our faith is in vain, and we remain in our sins, as Saint Paul would say (cf. 1 Cor 15:17).

The issue was not simple during those times of theological Trinitarian controversy. Certainly, the apostolic generation forever internalized the Lord's apostolic mandate to go into the entire world,

baptizing people in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 28:19). However, it was quite another matter to delve into — without diluting — the mystery of the Holy Trinity, to formulate it as we recite on feast days (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed).

Saint Hilary is a refined forerunner of our Creed: "Thee, O God Eternal, Father of the Eternal and Only-begotten God, Who alone art without birth, and of the One Lord Jesus Christ, born of Thee from everlasting. We may not sever Him from Thee, or make Him one of a plurality of Gods, on any plea of difference of nature. We may not say that He is not begotten of Thee, because Thou art One. We must not fail to confess Him as true God, seeing that He is born of Thee, true God, His Father" (from the "Treatise on the Trinity").