

**“To Catholics Suffering at the Hand of Arian Heretics”
Letter by St. Athanasius ~ 360 AD**

May God comfort you. I know moreover that not only this thing saddens you, but also the fact that while others have obtained the churches by violence, you are meanwhile cast out from your places. For they hold the buildings, but you the Apostolic Faith. They are, it is true, in the churches, but outside of the true Faith; while you are outside the churches indeed, but the Faith, within you.

Let us consider whether is the greater, the structure or the Faith. Clearly the true Faith. Who then has lost more, or who possesses more? He who holds the building, or he who holds the Faith? Good indeed is the place, when the Apostolic Faith is preached there, holy is it if the Holy One dwells there ... But ye are blessed, who by faith are in the Church, dwell upon the foundations of the faith, and have full satisfaction, even the highest degree of faith which remains among you unshaken. For it has come down to you from Apostolic Tradition, and frequently has accursed envy wished to unsettle it, but has not been able.

On the contrary, they have rather been cut off by their attempts to do so. For this is it that is written, 'Thou art the Son of the Living God,' Peter confessing it by revelation of the Father, and being told, 'Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood did not reveal it to thee, but 'My Father Who is in heaven,' and the rest. No one therefore will ever prevail against your Faith most beloved brethren. For if ever God shall give back the churches (for we think He will) yet without such restoration of the churches the Faith is sufficient for us. And test, speaking without the Scriptures, I should seem to speak too strongly, it is well to bring you to the testimony of Scriptures, for recollect that the Temple indeed was at Jerusalem; the Temple was not deserted, aliens had invaded it, whence also the Temple being at Jerusalem, those exiles went down to Babylon by the judgment of God, who was proving, or rather correcting them; while manifesting to them in their ignorance punishment [by means] of blood-thirsty enemies. And aliens indeed had held the Place, but knew not the Lord of the Place while in that He neither gave answer nor spoke they were deserted by the truth. What profit then is the Place to them?

For behold, they that hold the Place are charged by them that love God with making it a den of thieves, and with madly making the Holy Place a house of merchandise, and a house of judicial business for themselves to whom it was unlawful to enter there. For this and worse than this is what we have heard, most beloved, from those who are come from thence. However really, then, they seem to hold the church, so much the more truly are they cast out. And they think themselves to be within the truth, but are exiled, and in captivity, and gain no advantage by the church alone. For the truth of things is judged.