

Would a Patriarch Lie?

During the persecution of Pope Athanasius at the hands of the Aryans, he felt that his presence in Alexandria caused troubles for his faithful congregation. As a result, he decided to leave Alexandria and to go to Upper Egypt in a small boat with some of his children. When the governor of Alexandria was informed that the Pope had left town, he sent a convoy to chase him down, arrest him, and bring him back.

As the Pope's ship was sailing ahead, he surprised everyone when he said: "Let's go back to Alexandria." They turned the ship around heading north. Shortly thereafter, they came across the governor's ship and the commander of the soldiers asked them: "Have you seen Athanasius and his men?"

The Pope was sitting among his children as if he was one of them. He simply answered: "He is not far from you". The commander, who did not know the Pope, thought that he was closing in on him, so he ordered his sailors to go south, while the Pope's ship was safely sailing north in peace!

The Pope did not lie; he spoke wisely, exactly, and truthfully.

Lord Jesus gave His commandment to the Church: ***"Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."*** (Mathew 10:16)

What is the wisdom of serpents?

A serpent is characterized with prudence and its ability to flee from danger

Saint Augustine says that when serpent ages it enters into a small hole, sheds its old skin, and comes out of that whole with a renewed vitality and activity. And this is how it renews its youth.

God asks us to be wise with others, as Pope Athanasius was. We should avoid dangers without lying, and be wise with ourselves. We should shed aside the old man (sin) and put on (the new life) through

repentance... ***"That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."*** (Ephesians 4:22-25).

My dear brothers and sisters: we have to learn how to obtain the new life and how to keep it, and how to face the enemy of Goodness with wisdom of serpents.



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