
H.E. Cardinal Mario Luigi Ciappi

The protagonists of the Council

Some of the greatest figures of the Renaissance—such as the saint and economic theorist Antonino Pierozzi and the artist Fra Angelico—were associated with Santa Maria Novella in Florence, where the sessions of the Council were held in 1439. From Cardinal Ciappi's remarks:

I was very glad to accept making the introduction to this conference, also because I am a Florentine, a Dominican, and therefore interested in this commemoration of the fifth centenary of the Council of Florence. Since I am the theologian of the Papal Household, and closely tied to the Holy Father, I remember well that Popes Pius XI, Pius XII, and Paul VI, in their speeches and teachings, barely hinted at the Florentine Council. Yet John XXIII, formerly the Patriarch of Venice, recalled in his teachings on July 21, 1960, the great Venetian Pope Eugene IV, Gabriele Condulmaro, who convoked and presided over the Council of Florence.

Eugene IV was elected Pope in 1431 and found himself governing the Church in very difficult and calamitous times. But he had the great consolation of being able to preside over an ecumenical council in Florence, during which many good things were done for the Church, and which offered an outstanding example of what the reunion of all Christians could be. As a Dominican, a son of the convent of Santa Maria Novella, where I was received into the order of Preaching Friars in 1919, at the age of 10, and as Master of the Sacred Palace, I like to recall the two principal orators of the Council, Giovanni di Montenero, the provincial superior of the Dominicans of Genoa, for the Latin side, regarding the *Filioque* doctrine; and Father Juan Torquemada, from Valladolid, a Spaniard, regarding the primacy of the Pope and the Eucharist.

The former gave his speeches in the meetings held on March 21 and 24, 1439; the latter, on June 16 and 18. Torquemada had been named Master of the Sacred Palace by Eugene IV, on March 4, 1431, and then exalted as *Defensor Fidei* at the Council of Florence. On Oct. 18, 1448 he was raised to the College of Cardinals. . . .

We must also remember the Prior of St. Mark's in Florence, Friar Antonino Pierozzi, the future archbishop of Florence, named to that post by Eugene IV in 1445. He was not an official theologian at the Council of Florence, which started on March 3, 1439 and ended on Feb. 24, 1443. But he was an eyewitness to the Union, and surely no passive one, given his great loyalty to St. Thomas.

Together with St. Antonino we must also remember, in connection with the Council of Florence, Father Domenico Corella, provincial superior of the Roman province of the Preaching Friars, resident in the convent of Santa Maria Novella during the period of the Council. It was he who had the honor of hosting Pope Eugene IV, who was a guest at the convent. Father Corella, a native of the province of Florence, was a celebrated humanist, outstanding poet, Latinist, and enthusiast of the city of Florence, to which he dedicated the work, *De Illustratione Urbis Florentinae*. He was also the author of an elegiac poem in honor of the Virgin, to whom the Cathedral is dedicated. The title, which the Greek Christians also liked, was *Teotoco de Laudibus Beatae Mariae Virginis*. So one can very well understand why the chronicles of Santa Maria Novella record explicitly that several times, Fra Domenico Corella spoke, "*ornatissime et laudatissime*," before the Pope and his court. Eugene IV was also a humanist and patron of artists. Both the Pope and Domenico Corella had occasion to meet many times the painter Fra Giovanni da Fiesole [Fra Angelico], who was working in those days for the Church of S. Maria Novella and St. Mark's convent in Florence. Fra Domenico Corella was the first to call Fra Giovanni "the angelic painter," and so he was recognized also by Eugene IV, who asked him to adorn old St. Peter's in Rome with his paintings, and by Pope Nicholas V, who picked him to beautify the Chapel of the Sacrament and his private chapel in the Vatican with his angelic images. So he certainly was no stranger to the extraordinary event of the Council of Florence, where the doctrines so much studied and elaborated by the Dominican friars, followers of St. Thomas, among whom Fra Antonino Pierozzi stood out, were being discussed between the Latins and the Greeks.

Now as a Dominican, as witness to my Catholic faith, my consonance with the thought of St. Augustine and St. Thomas on the procession of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity, I am happy to recall the motto on my cardinal's coat of arms: *Verbum non quaecumque, sed inspirans amorem*. St. Thomas (affirming in his *Summa Theologica*: "The son is the Word, but not just any Word, rather a Word that breathes love") follows St. Augustine, whose *De Trinitate* is immediately cited by him: *Verbum quod insinuare intendimus, cum amore notitia est* ("The Word of which we speak is a cognition filled with love").

I hope that as a result of this conference-ecumenical meeting on the Florentine Council, as far as the procession of the Holy Spirit is concerned, we find ourselves in agreement in maintaining, with the decree for the Greeks, that the Greek formula, "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son," is equivalent to the one used by the Latins: "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son," as in his time, St. Thomas had already stated in the *Summa Theologica*. This is my hope, which I think will find consensus with everyone, because it is what the Greek and Latin fathers had already accepted in Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, when the Florentine Council ended in 1443.