

Saint Hormisdas
Lived During 450–523 A.D.

How do you handle conflicts? Do you immediately assume that whoever doesn't agree with you isn't on your side?

We all tend to get defensive when our position seems to be under attack. Jesus' words are especially important during these moments: "Whoever is not against us is for us." (Mark 9:40)

Saint Hormisdas had to take these words to heart when he unexpectedly became Pope during a time of schism.

Born in Frosinone, Italy, Hormisdas was initially married and had a son, who later became Pope Silverius. Following the death of his wife, he dedicated himself to the clergy, eventually being ordained a deacon in the Vatican. His reputation for diplomacy and composure under pressure eventually led to him being elected pope.

When Hormisdas became pope, he inherited a 30-year-long schism between the western and eastern branches of the Church. Essentially, it came down to a disagreement over whether the pope, the leader of the western branch, had final say on doctrinal differences with the patriarch, the leader of the eastern branch. The western and eastern branches were on the brink of declaring themselves different churches, as is unfortunately the case today.

Pope Hormisdas did not seek further conflict. He did not look at the eastern branch as heretics or even enemies. Instead, he reaffirmed that the Catholic Church truly is one church, and that the western and eastern branches were the two lungs of Catholicism.

He crafted the "Formula of Hormisdas," a profession of faith that affirmed the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. This document was pivotal, as it was eventually signed by all Eastern bishops, including the Patriarch of Constantinople, formally ending the schism in 519 AD.

Pope Hormisdas is now known as Saint Hormisdas because he did not condemn those who disagreed with him. Instead, he calmly and lovingly brought them back into the fold. He lived by Jesus' simple yet difficult words: "Whoever is not against us is for us."

This is going to be a critical lesson in the years ahead. Times are coming when all people of goodwill, all people of faith and values, are going to need to band together or we will be destroyed.

This isn't meant to provoke fear, but rather preparation. Be careful who you cast aside as not being for us, don't assume that someone who is not vocally for us is against us. Jesus is clear, "Whoever is not against us is for us."