

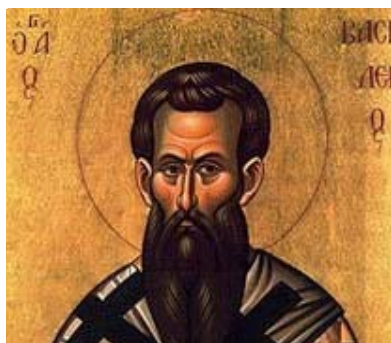


Saint Basil

By a Mighty Arrow

Reference: The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Basil, Saint (circa 329-379), called Basil the Great, Father and Doctor of the Church, patriarch of Eastern monasticism.



Born of wealthy parents in Caesarea Mazaca (modern Kayseri, Turkey), Basil was educated in Athens and Constantinople (present-day Istanbul). After visiting a number of noted hermits in Egypt and Syria, he gave up an administrative career and settled as a hermit by the river Iris in Neo-Caesarea. He organized monastic life in and around Caesarea, bringing structure and organization into the way of life learnt in Egypt. He put forward in two books precepts for the monastic life, called *The Longer Rule* and *The Shorter Rule*, this was revised by Theodore the Studite in the early ninth century, and is a basic document for Eastern Monasticism. Most Orthodox and some Roman Catholic monks still follow the rule of St. Basil. Noted for his brilliance and the holiness of his life, he was called upon by the bishop of Caesarea to defend Christian doctrine against the heretical attacks of the Arians. In 370 he himself was elected Bishop of Caesarea, a post he held until his death on January 1, 379.

His writings include *Against Eunomius*, three books directed against the Arian leader Eunomius; *On the Holy Spirit*, a doctrinal treatise; and the *Moralia*, an anthology of New Testament verses. He also wrote a

liturgy (known as the Liturgy of St. Basil) still used in our Coptic church. His feast day is January 1 in the Eastern church and January 2 in the Western church.

Basil, his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa, and his friend St. Gregory of Nazianzus are known collectively as the Cappadocian Fathers. Basil's grandmother Macrina; his parents, Basil and Emmelia; his sister Macrina, and his younger brothers Gregory and Peter of Sebaste are all venerated as saints.

One of the old men said, "When St. Basil came to the monastery one day, he said to the abbot, after the customary exhortation, {Have you a brother who is obedient?} the other replied, {They are all your servants, master, and strive for their salvation.}, But he repeated, {Have you a brother who is obedient?}, Then the abbot led a brother to him and St. Basil used him to serve during the meal. When the meal was ended, the brother brought him some water for rinsing his hands and St. Basil said to him, {Come here, so that I also may offer you water.} The brother allowed the bishop to pour the water. Then St. Basil said to him, {When I enter the sanctuary, come, that I may ordain you deacon.} When this was done, he ordained him priest and took him with him to the bishop's palace because of his obedience"