

*We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.*

# Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



**Sunday, January 1, 2017**

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8 (*Sunday before the Theophany*)  
Gospel: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52 (*Circumcision*)

**Tone 3**  
Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8  
Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12

*28<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost*

**The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; Sunday before Theophany, St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (379). Martyr Basil of Ancyra (ca. 362).**

### **Troparion – Tone 1**

*Enthroned on high with the Eternal Father and Your divine Spirit, / O Jesus, You willed to be born on earth of the unwedded handmaid, your Mother. / Therefore You were circumcised as an eight-day old Child. / Glory to Your most gracious counsel; / glory to Your dispensation; / glory to Your condescension, O only Lover of mankind.*

### **Kontakion – Tone 3**

*The Lord of all accepts to be circumcised, / thus, as He is good, excises the sins of mortal men. / Today He grants the world salvation, / while light-bearing Basil, high priest of our Creator, / rejoices in heaven as a divine initiate of Christ.*



*The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*

### **Prayer Requests**

#### **For Health of:**

**Nikita Dedja**, during her illness, offered by Sub-Deacon Vlashi.  
**Archbishop Michael, the Diocese of NY/NJ, Orthodox Church of the Mother of God and all the clergy and parishioners** for the New Year.

### **Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity**

**Elder Thaddeus: Pray for All Men.**

“It is our duty to pray sincerely for all men, that God may grant peace and joy to all.”

### **St John Chrysostom: Shining True Faith!**

“There would be no need for sermons, if our lives were shining. There would be no need for words, if we bore witness with our deeds. There would be no pagans, if we were true Christians.”

*Liturgical Schedule*

**Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup>**

9:30 am: No Sunday School  
9:40 am: Hours  
9:45 am: General  
Confession  
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

**Thursday, January 5<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Theophany-  
Blessing of Waters

**Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am: Sunday School  
9:40 am: Hours  
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

**Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am: Sunday School  
9:40 am: Hours  
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

**Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>**

9:30 am: Sunday School  
9:40 am: Hours  
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

*Bulletin Sponsors*

*Sub-Deacon Vlashi*

*Readings:*

**The Prokeimenon in the 6<sup>th</sup>Tone (Circumcision):**

O Lord, save Thy people / and bless Thine inheritance!  
*(Psalm 27:9)*

vs. To thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!  
*(Psalm 27:1)*

**Another, Tone 1 (St. Basil)**

My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.  
*(Psalm 48:4)*

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**Epistle:** 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Sunday before the Theophany)

**Timothy**, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

**Epistle:** Colossians 2:8-12 (Circumcision)

**Brethren, beware** lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

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**Alleluia in the 8<sup>th</sup>Tone (Circumcision):**

O God, be bountiful to us and bless us, show the light of Thy countenance upon us, and have mercy on us!  
*(Psalm 66:2)*

vs. That we may know Thy way upon the earth, and Thy salvation among all nations.  
*(Psalm 66:3)*

**Another, Tone 8 (St. Basil):**

Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, Thou Who leadest Joseph like a flock!  
*(Psalm 79:2)*

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**Gospel:** Mark 1:1-8 (Sunday before the Theophany)

**The beginning** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**Gospel:** Luke 2:20-21, 40-52 (Circumcision)

**Then the shepherds returned**, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.



***The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***

On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised in accordance with the Old Testament Law. All male infants underwent circumcision as a sign of God's Covenant with the holy Forefather Abraham and his descendants [Genesis 17:10-14, Leviticus 12:3].

After this ritual, the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, as the Archangel Gabriel declared on the day of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos [Luke 1:31-33, 2:21]. The Fathers of the Church explain that the Lord, the Creator of the Law, underwent circumcision in order to give people an example of how faithfully the divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord was circumcised so that later no one would doubt that He had truly assumed human flesh, and that His Incarnation was not merely an illusion, as certain heretics had taught.

In the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision gave way to the Mystery of Baptism, which it prefigured [Colossians 2:11-12]. Accounts of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord continue in the Eastern Church right up through the fourth century. The Canon of the Feast was written by Saint Stephen of the Saint Sava Monastery.

In addition to circumcision, which the Lord accepted as a sign of God's Covenant with mankind, He also received the Name Jesus [Savior] on the eighth day after His Nativity as an indication of His service, the work of the salvation of the world [Matthew 1:21; Mark 9:38-39, 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Philippians 2:9-10]. These two events -- the Lord's Circumcision and Naming -- remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" [Colossians 2:11]. The very name "Christian" is a sign of mankind's entrance into a New Covenant with God.

*"Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Joy of all the Sorrowful" founded in 1966*



**Bulletin Sponsor:** Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

**Memorial Candles:** Candles be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

**Private Confessions:** Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

**General Confession:** Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

**Pannikhida Service:** The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

**Special Announcements** for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:

[OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com](mailto:OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com)

**The Living Clean Group** of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

**The Grey Book Step Meeting Group** of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



### *Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News*

***May everyone have a blessed and Happy New Year!***

***Next Council meeting: January 29, 2017***

***Annual Parish meeting: February 12, 2017 after Divine Liturgy***

***Thursday 1/5/16: Theophany/Blessing of Waters***



### *NY/NJ Diocese News*

Please consider becoming a 2016 **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactor**, helping the Diocese in the work of providing scholarships for seminarians, support for fledgling missing parishes, and assistance to existing parishes that are struggling financially? Your tax-deductible contribution is a fulfillment of the directive given us in the Scriptures by Saint Paul: *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). Please know that whatever donation you offer will be greatly appreciated by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael and all the clergy and faithful of the parishes of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey ... and, trusting in the Lord's own words, your gift will be blessed by God, the Giver of every good thing.



### *Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News*

**Annual DC March for Life to be held Friday, January 27**

January 22, 2017 marks the 44th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion in the United States, and Orthodox Christians from across the US will be among those gathering in the US Capital on Friday, January 27 to participate in the annual March for Life. [Due to the inauguration of President-Elect Donald Trump, this year's March will be held one week later than usual. Sanctity of Life Sunday, however, will not be affected, and will be observed on January 15.]

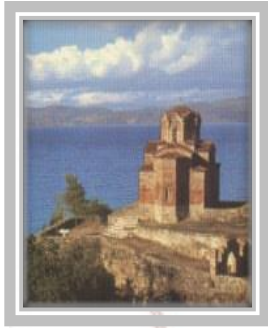
*“Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Joy of all the Sorrowful” founded in 1966*

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon will join other Orthodox Christian hierarchs, seminarians, and clergy and faithful from around the country in the annual March, which will conclude with the celebration of Memorial Prayers for the victims of abortion near the US Capital.

The theme of this year’s March is “The Power of One.”

The March will begin at noon on the grounds of the Washington Monument. Orthodox Christian participants are asked to gather at the “Orthodox Christians for Life” banner, which will be prominently displayed to the right of the stage near Constitution Avenue, between 15th and 17th Streets North West. Metropolitan Tikhon and other hierarchs will be present on the stage for the opening prayers and presentations prior to the March.

Metropolitan Tikhon also will offer the benediction at the annual Rose Banquet on the evening of the March. General information on the March and the banquet—including details on making reservations—is available on the March for Life web site. Information on Orthodox Christians for Life is also available. Additional information will be posted on the OCA web site as it becomes available.



*Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, LXXXVIII:*

*I raise my arms to You, my Shepherd, but my arms do not reach very far.*

In vain does a sheep in a hole try to raise himself to the top; if the shepherd does not stoop down to help it, it will fall back in.

Your grace reaches further than the rays of the sun. Take hold of my hands, and lead me out of this dungeon. Just one ray of Your grace -- and I shall lift myself up on the wings of an eagle.

Beneath a stone grass is trying to grow, having become hunchbacked from seeking light and ashen-faced from lack of light. Great is my joy as a mortal, when I lift the stone and see the grass straightening itself up and becoming green.

Was not Your joy even greater, Immortal Lord, when You lifted the stone that the world had rolled over my soul, hunchbacked and ashen-faced?

In vain do I gather wood into a pile to warm my soul, if You do not kindle it with fire from heaven.

In vain do I run; if I am going the wrong way, my running is futile.

All my effort and my sweat is a sacrifice to You. If You are unwilling to accept it, I shall be like a mountain climber buried in snow on the mountain's peak.

For You do not look at the multitude of efforts but at the yearning of hearts.

What do you have to yearn for, my heart? Wherever the eye looks, it sees death. Whatever the hand touches it feels death.

Whatever you find, you also find the fear that you may lose it. Whatever you fall in love with fills you with the sorrow of its loss.

My restless thoughts, you push your way through my mind like drunkards at a fair, and you keep falling and dying like locusts on a highway. Everything that sent you into me will die, and not one of you will be saved from my grave, except those which have tied themselves to the Graveless, Undying Lord.

Truly, you entered a sepulcher when you entered me, and like gravediggers you are preparing my grave.

But when the trumpet, the long-tubed blaring trumpet, sounds in my soul, and heralds the coming of the Son of God!2 Then will all the mortal yearnings of my heart, and all the mortal thoughts of my mind be separated to the left, and the field of my heart and mind will be cleansed.3

And the Son of God will enter this field, and will level all the tombs you have prepared for me like molehills. And the Son of God will wash me and bathe me and make me fragrant with myrrh -- not for death but for life.4

I myself immured myself, O Lord, walling myself off from Your grace. And I did not dare to poke my head outside, for You are like a fearsome wind. I built shacks and shanties in my soul and was afraid that You would demolish them. But You have not demolished them in order to leave me homeless, but have done so in order to take me into a palace more spacious and radiant than the star-filled universe.

People rejected Your cornerstone, because it is too immense for their shacks and shanties.5 Insane builders rejected it, because they do not know what to build on it. Being forgetful, they cannot remember that You are the builder, and that their whole job is not to interfere with You in Your work.

Your cornerstone is too immense, and giants are afraid to approach it. They say: "If we begin with this, when shall we finish?"

The wretches, how death frightens them off from every good beginning!

How time compels them to build one-day edifices!

Extend Your grace to me, grace which penetrates further than sunbeams, my Rich Lord, and I shall dare to stand beside the rejected stone.

Indeed, You are grace. Come down and lift me up.

Expel death and time from me and, together with You, I shall build what the earthly giants did not dare.

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*Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LXXXVIII:*

**III. Us and Our Neighbors  
Relationships With Other People**

Adorn yourself with truth, try to speak truth in all things; and do not support a lie, no matter who asks you. If you speak the truth and someone gets mad at you, don't be upset, but take comfort in the words of the Lord: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of truth, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:10).

+ (St. Gennadius of Constantinople, *The Golden Chain*, 26,29)



*The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon*

**The War of Ideology**

*The struggle between two worlds*

The world is in a new struggle not unlike that which happened during the Soviet Union and the cold war that was brought on after the fall of the Royal House of Romanov. This was followed by World War II when we saw the struggle between the free world and the fascism of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan.

All these ideologies have much in common with Islam, where there is a non-democratic tradition and people live under strict rules that leave little room for personal choice, and where fate governs the people. The idea of mankind being formed in the image and likeness of God and having a role in making choices for ourselves, is foreign to Islam. The god of Islam demands submission, just as did communism and fascism.

In Christ you have freedom. God does not demand submission but desires your freely offered love and worship. God has invited you into loving communion because He first loved you. This is a personal relationship that is offered to you, not one based on rigid rules and forms that bespeak of a god who is all about law and submission.

The war of ideology between the Christian West and the Islamic world is one that promises the get worse before it gets better. Some authorities are projecting this war of ideology will go on for at least two generations, much as happened during the Communist days of the Soviet Union. The only way to survive this war is to make Christ central in your life. This world will change for the better only when change has begun in you.

The Islamic world will never know Christ if all they see from the West is secular and worldly idolatry, lust for their oil reserves, and disrespect for their ancient cultural traditions. They must see the love of Christ in our hearts. Muslim neighbors must be treated with the love that Christ tells us must be extended even to our enemies. If all the Islamic world sees as Christian, is the secularism and base worldliness that has replaced Christianity, they will never know the truth that is in Christ.



*Daily Reflection*  
**On New Year's Resolutions**

*“Give us this day (σήμερον) our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” (Mt 6: 11-12)*



I have nothing against “New Year’s resolutions,” except that they don’t work for me. So this morning I gratefully note that a life in Christ is a daily “resolution” or decision, rather than an annual or monthly or weekly one. Our Lord teaches me to pray about today, handing over to Him my concerns about today’s “bread,” and embracing forgiveness of others and myself, on this day.

Let me unburden myself today, and pray as He taught me, so that I don’t bite off more than I can chew. “...Do not be anxious about tomorrow,” He says to me this morning, “for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s

own trouble be sufficient for the day.” (Mt 6: 34)

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***Holy Orthodox Quotes***

“We do not sin against our will, but we first assent to an evil thought and so fall into captivity.”

**+St Peter of Damascus**

**James 1:13-15**

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. † But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. † Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

**1 Corinthians 10:12-14**

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

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***The Philokalia: Daily Readings***

Jesus is the Christ, One of the Holy Trinity. You are destined to be His heir.

**+ St Thalassios the Libyan, 400 Texts on Love and Self-Control**

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***Ancient Christian Wisdom***

While praying, a person should not have any thoughts, but rather become selfless.

Even the Holy Fathers say this:

“While at prayer, behave as though there were no one else in the world, just you and God.”

When praying, we should not be preoccupied with ourselves, because in that case we are so absorbed in our own needs that we ourselves are detrimental to our prayer.

We interfere with our own prayer.

We are our own obstacle.

We often think that evil is somewhere out there, but if it were not for the evil that already exists in us, the evil “out there” would not be able to touch us.

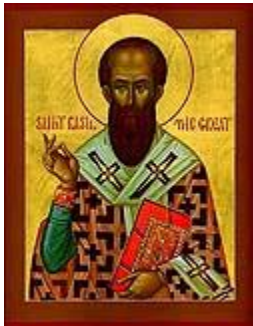
The evil is in us.

However, this evil itself is not to blame.

We are to blame for having let it into our hearts and for having disturbed our peace.

Let us say someone is threatening us, or trying to talk us into doing something bad. Let him do so; this person has a will of his own. Let him do his job, and we will do ours, which is to preserve our inner peace.

**+ Elder Thaddeus**



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***St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia***

Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, “belongs not to the Church of Caesarea alone, nor merely to his own time, nor was he of benefit only to his own kinsmen, but rather to all lands and cities worldwide, and to all people he brought and still brings benefit, and for Christians he always was and will be a most salvific teacher.” Thus spoke Saint Basil’s contemporary, Saint Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium.

Saint Basil was born in the year 330 at Caesarea, the administrative center of Cappadocia. He was of illustrious lineage, famed for its eminence and wealth, and zealous for the Christian Faith. The saint’s grandfather and grandmother on his father’s side had to hide in the forests of Pontus for seven years during the persecution under Diocletian.

Saint Basil’s mother Saint Emilia was the daughter of a martyr. On the Greek calendar, she is commemorated on May 30. Saint Basil’s father was also named Basil. He was a lawyer and renowned rhetorician, and lived at Caesarea.

Ten children were born to the elder Basil and Emilia: five sons and five daughters. Five of them were later numbered among the saints: Basil the Great; Macrina (July 19) was an exemplar of ascetic life, and exerted strong influence on the life and character of Saint Basil the Great; Gregory, afterwards Bishop of Nyssa (January 10); Peter, Bishop of Sebaste (January 9); and Theosebia, a deaconess (January 10).

Saint Basil spent the first years of his life on an estate belonging to his parents at the River Iris, where he was raised under the supervision of his mother Emilia and grandmother Macrina. They were women of great refinement, who remembered an earlier bishop of Cappadocia, Saint Gregory the Wonderworker (November 17). Basil received his initial education under the supervision of his father, and then he studied under the finest teachers in Caesarea of Cappadocia, and it was here that he made the acquaintance of Saint Gregory the Theologian (January 25 and January 30). Later, Basil transferred to a school at Constantinople, where he listened to eminent orators and philosophers. To complete his education Saint Basil went to Athens, the center of classical enlightenment.

After a four or five year stay at Athens, Basil had mastered all the available disciplines. “He studied everything thoroughly, more than others are wont to study a single subject. He studied each science in its very totality, as though he would study nothing else.” Philosopher, philologist, orator, jurist, naturalist, possessing profound knowledge in astronomy, mathematics and medicine, “he was a ship fully laden with learning, to the extent permitted by human nature.”

At Athens a close friendship developed between Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzus), which continued throughout their life. In fact, they regarded themselves as one soul in two bodies. Later on, in his eulogy for Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian speaks with delight about this period: “Various hopes guided us, and indeed inevitably, in learning... Two paths opened up before us: the one to our sacred temples and the teachers therein; the other towards preceptors of disciplines beyond.”

About the year 357, Saint Basil returned to Caesarea, where for a while he devoted himself to rhetoric. But soon, refusing offers from Caesarea’s citizens who wanted to entrust him with the education of their offspring, Saint Basil entered upon the path of ascetic life.

After the death of her husband, Basil’s mother, her eldest daughter Macrina, and several female servants withdrew to the family estate at Iris and there began to lead an ascetic life. Basil was baptized by Dianios, the Bishop of Caesarea, and was tonsured a Reader (On the Holy Spirit, 29). He first read the Holy Scriptures to the people, then explained them.

Later on, “wishing to acquire a guide to the knowledge of truth”, the saint undertook a journey into Egypt, Syria and Palestine, to meet the great Christian ascetics dwelling there. On returning to Cappadocia, he decided to do as they did. He distributed his wealth to the needy, then settled on the opposite side of the river not far from his mother Emilia and sister Macrina, gathering around him monks living a cenobitic life.

By his letters, Basil drew his good friend Gregory the Theologian to the monastery. Saints Basil and Gregory labored in strict abstinence in their dwelling place, which had no roof or fireplace, and the food was very humble. They themselves cleared away the stones, planted and watered the trees, and carried heavy loads. Their hands were constantly calloused from the hard work. For clothing Basil had only a tunic and monastic mantle. He wore a hairshirt, but only at night, so that it would not be obvious.

In their solitude, Saints Basil and Gregory occupied themselves in an intense study of Holy Scripture. They were guided by the writings of the Fathers and commentators of the past, especially the good writings of Origen. From all these works they compiled an anthology called Philokalia. Also at this time, at the request of the monks, Saint Basil wrote down a collection of rules for virtuous life. By his preaching and by his example Saint Basil assisted in the spiritual perfection of Christians in Cappadocia and Pontus; and many indeed turned to him. Monasteries were organized for men and for women, in which places Basil sought to combine the cenobitic (koine bios, or common) lifestyle with that of the solitary hermit.

During the reign of Constantius (337-361) the heretical teachings of Arius were spreading, and the Church summoned both its saints into service. Saint Basil returned to Caesarea. In the year 362 he was ordained deacon by Bishop Meletius of Antioch. In 364 he was ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. “But seeing,” as Gregory the Theologian relates, “that everyone exceedingly praised and honored Basil for his wisdom and reverence, Eusebius, through human weakness, succumbed to jealousy of him, and began to show dislike for him.” The monks rose up in defense of Saint Basil. To avoid causing Church discord, Basil withdrew to his own monastery and concerned himself with the organization of monasteries.

With the coming to power of the emperor Valens (364-378), who was a resolute adherent of Arianism, a time of troubles began for Orthodoxy, the onset of a great struggle. Saint Basil hastily returned to Caesarea at the request of



Bishop Eusebius. In the words of Gregory the Theologian, he was for Bishop Eusebius “a good advisor, a righteous representative, an expounder of the Word of God, a staff for the aged, a faithful support in internal matters, and an activist in external matters.”

From this time church governance passed over to Basil, though he was subordinate to the hierarch. He preached daily, and often twice, in the morning and in the evening. During this time Saint Basil composed his Liturgy. He wrote a work “On the Six Days of Creation” (Hexaemeron) and another on the Prophet Isaiah in sixteen chapters, yet another on the Psalms, and also a second compilation of monastic rules. Saint Basil wrote also three books “Against Eunomius,” an Arian teacher who, with the help of Aristotelian concepts, had presented the Arian dogma in philosophic form, converting Christian teaching into a logical scheme of rational concepts.

Saint Gregory the Theologian, speaking about the activity of Basil the Great during this period, points to “the caring for the destitute and the taking in of strangers, the supervision of virgins, written and unwritten monastic rules for monks, the arrangement of prayers [Liturgy], the felicitous arrangement of altars and other things.” Upon the death of Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, Saint Basil was chosen to succeed him in the year 370. As Bishop of Caesarea, Saint Basil the Great was the newest of fifty bishops in eleven provinces. Saint Athanasius the Great (May 2), with joy and with thanks to God welcomed the appointment to Cappadocia of such a bishop as Basil, famed for his reverence, deep knowledge of Holy Scripture, great learning, and his efforts for the welfare of Church peace and unity.

Under Valens, the external government belonged to the Arians, who held various opinions regarding the divinity of the Son of God, and were divided into several factions. These dogmatic disputes were concerned with questions about the Holy Spirit. In his books Against Eunomios, Saint Basil the Great taught the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His equality with the Father and the Son. Subsequently, in order to provide a full explanation of Orthodox teaching on this question, Saint Basil wrote his book On the Holy Spirit at the request of Saint Amphilochius, the Bishop of Iconium.

Saint Basil’s difficulties were made worse by various circumstances: Cappadocia was divided in two under the rearrangement of provincial districts. Then at Antioch a schism occurred, occasioned by the consecration of a second bishop. There was the negative and haughty attitude of Western bishops to the attempts to draw them into the struggle with the Arians. And there was also the departure of Eustathius of Sebaste over to the Arian side. Basil had been connected to him by ties of close friendship. Amidst the constant perils Saint Basil gave encouragement to the Orthodox, confirmed them in the Faith, summoning them to bravery and endurance. The holy bishop wrote numerous letters to the churches, to bishops, to clergy and to individuals. Overcoming the heretics “by the weapon of his mouth, and by the arrows of his letters,” as an untiring champion of Orthodoxy, Saint Basil challenged the hostility and intrigues of the Arian heretics all his life. He has been compared to a bee, stinging the Church’s enemies, yet nourishing his flock with the sweet honey of his teaching.

The emperor Valens, mercilessly sending into exile any bishop who displeased him, and having implanted Arianism into other Asia Minor provinces, suddenly appeared in Cappadocia for this same purpose. He sent the prefect Modestus to Saint Basil. He began to threaten the saint with the confiscation of his property, banishment, beatings, and even death.

Saint Basil said, “If you take away my possessions, you will not enrich yourself, nor will you make me a pauper. You have no need of my old worn-out clothing, nor of my few books, of which the entirety of my wealth is comprised. Exile means nothing to me, since I am bound to no particular place. This place in which I now dwell is not mine, and any place you send me shall be mine. Better to say: every place is God’s. Where would I be neither a stranger and sojourner (Ps. 38/39:13)? Who can torture me? I am so weak, that the very first blow would render me insensible. Death would be a kindness to me, for it will bring me all the sooner to God, for Whom I live and labor, and to Whom I hasten.”

The official was stunned by his answer. “No one has ever spoken so audaciously to me,” he said.

“Perhaps,” the saint remarked, “that is because you’ve never spoken to a bishop before. In all else we are meek, the most humble of all. But when it concerns God, and people rise up against Him, then we, counting everything else as naught, look to Him alone. Then fire, sword, wild beasts and iron rods that rend the body, serve to fill us with joy, rather than fear.”

Reporting to Valens that Saint Basil was not to be intimidated, Modestus said, “Emperor, we stand defeated by a leader of the Church.” Basil the Great again showed firmness before the emperor and his retinue and made such a strong impression on Valens that the emperor dared not give in to the Arians demanding Basil’s exile. “On the day of Theophany, amidst an innumerable multitude of the people, Valens entered the church and mixed in with the throng, in order to give the appearance of being in unity with the Church. When the singing of Psalms began in the church, it was like thunder to his hearing. The emperor beheld a sea of people, and in the altar and all around was splendor; in front of all was Basil, who acknowledged neither by gesture nor by glance, that anything else was going

on in church.” Everything was focused only on God and the altar-table, and the clergy serving there in awe and reverence.

Saint Basil celebrated the church services almost every day. He was particularly concerned about the strict fulfilling of the Canons of the Church, and took care that only worthy individuals should enter into the clergy. He incessantly made the rounds of his own church, lest anywhere there be an infraction of Church discipline, and setting aright any unseemliness. At Caesarea, Saint Basil built two monasteries, a men’s and a women’s, with a church in honor of the Forty Martyrs (March 9) whose relics were buried there. Following the example of monks, the saint’s clergy, even deacons and priests, lived in remarkable poverty, to toil and lead chaste and virtuous lives. For his clergy Saint Basil obtained an exemption from taxation. He used all his personal wealth and the income from his church for the benefit of the destitute; in every center of his diocese he built a poor-house; and at Caesarea, a home for wanderers and the homeless.

Sickly since youth, the toil of teaching, his life of abstinence, and the concerns and sorrows of pastoral service took their toll on him. Saint Basil died on January 1, 379 at age 49. Shortly before his death, the saint blessed Saint Gregory the Theologian to accept the See of Constantinople.

Upon the repose of Saint Basil, the Church immediately began to celebrate his memory. Saint Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (November 23), in his eulogy to Saint Basil the Great, said: “It is neither without a reason nor by chance that holy Basil has taken leave from the body and had repose from the world unto God on the day of the Circumcision of Jesus, celebrated between the day of the Nativity and the day of the Baptism of Christ. Therefore, this most blessed one, preaching and praising the Nativity and Baptism of Christ, extolling spiritual circumcision, himself forsaking the flesh, now ascends to Christ on the sacred day of remembrance of the Circumcision of Christ. Therefore, let it also be established on this present day annually to honor the memory of Basil the Great festively and with solemnity.”

Saint Basil is also called “the revealer of heavenly mysteries” (Ouranophantor), a “renowned and bright star,” and “the glory and beauty of the Church.” His honorable head is in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.

In some countries it is customary to sing special carols today in honor of Saint Basil. He is believed to visit the homes of the faithful, and a place is set for him at the table. People visit the homes of friends and relatives, and the mistress of the house gives a small gift to the children. A special bread (Vasilopita) is blessed and distributed after the Liturgy. A silver coin is baked into the bread, and whoever receives the slice with the coin is said to receive the blessing of Saint Basil for the coming year.

### ***St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia - Troparion & Kontakion***

#### ***Troparion — Tone 1***

*Your proclamation has gone out into all the earth / Which was divinely  
taught by hearing your voice / Expounding the nature of creatures, /  
Ennobling the manners of men. / O holy father of a royal priesthood, /  
Entreat Christ God that our souls may be saved.*

#### ***Kontakion — Tone 4***

*You were revealed as the sure foundation of the Church, / granting all  
mankind a lordship which cannot be taken away, / sealing it with your  
precepts, / venerable Basil, revealer of heaven.*

#### ***Kontakion — Tone 4***

*You were revealed as the sure foundation of the Church, / Granting all  
men a lordship which cannot be taken away, / Sealing it with your  
precepts, / O Venerable and Heavenly Father Basil.*

