



My Beloved Ones,

This week, we shall be blessed to celebrate the Feast of the Three Hierarchs, commemorating those great Fathers of the Church: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom.

These three were so respected that, for a time, there were arguments about which of them was the greatest. Much as modern individuals join political parties, the Basilians felt that the Saint was the greatest for his monastic example; the Johannites, because of St. John's oration; and the Gregorians, because of the Theologian's homilies, especially against the Arian heresy.

The fighting grew so strong, that the Three Hierarchs eventually appeared to St. John Mauropous (who was then a monk) in a vision, explaining that each was equal before the eyes of God, "*There are no divisions among us, and no opposition to one another.*" This vision inspired St. John Mauropous to compose a common service for the three Saints, to proclaim their brotherhood in Christ. Since each of these Saints is commemorated individually earlier in the month of January (St. Basil on the 1st, St. Gregory on the 25th, and the finding of St. John's relics on the 27th) it was decided that this celebration of all three should follow, on January 30th.

Because each of the Three Hierarchs were writers and scholars, we are also blessed to mark January 30th as a day to honor and reflect upon the importance of the Greek Letters, for these Saints succeeded in creating a bridge between the Ancient pagan philosophy and the Christian faith.

My brothers and sisters, we live in a time when our country and our society are deeply divided. How I wish that we could say, "*There are no divisions among us, and no opposition to one another.*" This is not possible in a world full of strife and sin, but it is possible for the Christian who puts his faith in the Lord and follows the examples of three righteous Hierarchs. We are called to exhibit the humility of St. Basil the Great, to witness our faith with the seriousness of St. Gregory the Theologian, as well as the passion of St. John Chrysostom.

Indeed, to tie together the celebrations of the Three Hierarchs and Greek Letters Day, a closed mind, one that is unwilling to learn or hear, can create suspicion, mistrust, and division—but it is when our minds and our hearts are open to our neighbors, that true dialogue can begin. Only then may we be able to say, "*There are no divisions among us, and no opposition to one another.*"

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta