

SAINTS ALIVE!
ST. BASIL THE GREAT
January 2

St. Basil the Great was born in 330. His concerns and expertise were many; his deep spirituality was signified in his great acts of charity including work with the poor, sick, hungry, and homeless.

“The bread which you do not use is the bread of the hungry; the garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of him who is naked; the shoes that you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot; the money that you keep locked away is the money of the poor; the acts of charity that you do not perform are so many injustices that you commit.”

He founded a vast hospital for the poor who were sick.



St. Basil is the patron of hospital administrators.

The Catholic Church has provided health care ever since the time of St. Basil: Catholic health care facilities provide care for 16% of U.S. hospital patients.

Health care is a basic human right, flowing from the sanctity and dignity of human life. Like St. Basil's priority for the poor, the U.S. Bishops advocate for health care that provides affordable, quality health care to everyone (including immigrants).

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky provides an excellent summary:

“Catholic health care should distinguish itself by service to and advocacy for those people whose social condition puts them at the margins of our society and makes them particularly vulnerable to discrimination: the poor, the uninsured and the underinsured; children and the unborn; single parents; the elderly; those with incurable diseases and chemical dependencies; racial minorities; immigrants and refugees. In particular, the person with mental or physical disabilities, regardless of the cause or severity must be treated as a unique person of incomparable worth, with the same right to life and to adequate health care as all other persons.”

The U.S. Catholic Bishops' second principle of health care is opposition to federal funding of elective abortions. Just as its priority for the poor is remarkably similar to St. Basil's priority 1800 years later, so is the Church's position on abortions. St Basil wrote, “The woman who purposely destroys her unborn child is guilty of murder. The hair-splitting difference between formed and unformed makes no difference to us.”

This leads to a third principle of Catholic health care: that health care laws effectively protect conscience rights. That is, that health care providers have a protected right to serve their patients without being forced to violate their moral and religious convictions.

In a time when the pressures on revenue and expenses may affect hospitals' commitment to the poor, and in an era when the priorities of government sometimes appear to trump an individual's right of conscience, hospital workers need all the help they can get.

Let us pray for all who are sick, all who are involved in healthcare, and all hospital administrators through the intercession of Saint Basil.

