

Mary is the Mother of God. We celebrate this with our Solemnity Mass each New Year's Day. We rejoice to proclaim the blessed ever-Virgin Mary Mother of God's Son and Mother of the Church.

One person we can thank for the faith we profess today is Saint Basil the Great who fought against the heresies of the 4th century especially Arianism which denied the divine nature of Jesusⁱ. In addition to explaining how Jesus Christ was one of three persons in the Trinity, he courageously defended the faith against those who would not accept the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Basil is one of the great Doctors of the Church who formulated the doctrine on the Trinity.

Saints are not made perfect, like us they struggle in life. As a younger man, Basil was a worldly success. "What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mk 8:36). After some soul searching on what really matters, Basil came to the conclusion that he had wasted much of his life. He himself confessed: "One day, like a man roused from deep sleep, I turned my eyes to the marvelous light of the truth of the Gospel..., and I wept many tears over my miserable life."ⁱⁱ

Basil turned to a life of prayer and flourished in this monastic vocation. The more he studied the life of Christ, the more he fell in love and wanted to give himself completely over to God. "Whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it" (Mk 8:35).

He immersed himself in Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Their lives and their meditation served as a light to guide him ever further into a life wholly devoted to God. He also had a living example of faith to follow in his sister Macrina, who was already living the ascetic life of a nun. In time, Basil was ordained a priest. Then, in the year 370 he became the Bishop of Caesarea in modern day Turkey. He served there until his death on the 1st of January 379.

One of Basil's closest friends was Saint Gregory Nazianzen. Together, these great friends and teachers of the faith share January 2nd as their feast day. They developed a close friendship in school that lasted a lifetime. After the death of Basil, Gregory continued his theological and spiritual writings for the betterment of the church.ⁱⁱⁱ

As a bishop, Basil promoted devotion to the monastic way of life and it bore much fruit in giving faithful witness to God in the local community. Basil's monks were known for their charitable acts. They "ran schools and hospitals, were at the service of the poor and thus demonstrated the integrity of Christian life."^{iv}

Basil himself was a champion for the poor. He challenged the social structures that marginalized people. He spoke truth to power and challenged the rulers to alleviate the sufferings of their subjects especially when natural disasters struck. He was an early proponent of religious freedom and had to go toe to toe with the emperor to defend the right to profess the true faith.

His own love of Scripture flowed over to the faithful. Through his example and encouragement, the faithful learned to know and love the Psalms. Through liturgy, worship, and prayer with the Church, Christian charity also overflowed from the people.

Part of Basil's greatness stems from his role as a servant leader. As Jesus teaches us, "The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Mt 23:12).

ⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-basil-the-great-103

ⁱⁱ vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20070704.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibreviary

^{iv} Ibid, Benedict XVI.