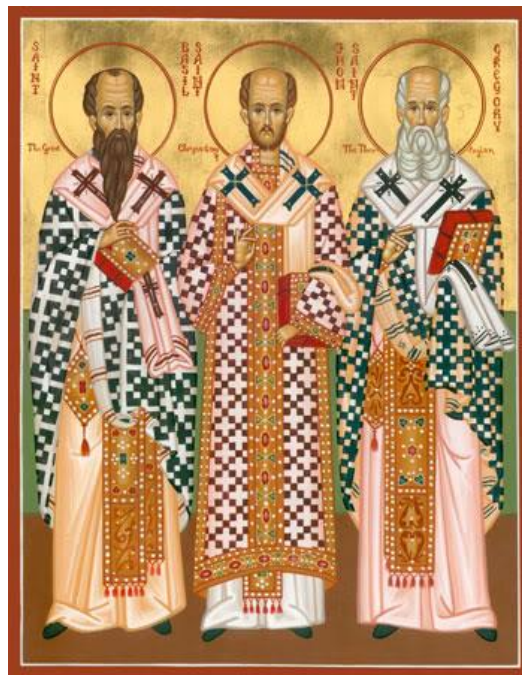


Adult Education – St. Luke’s Church – Sedona, AZ – Class 24
Introduction to the Doctors of the Church – Basil the Great & Gregory of Nazianzus
December 8, 2019

Note: for ease of accessing the web sites referenced in this handout, download your own PDF copy here: <http://www.episcopalnet.org/DBS/Sedona/AdultEducation2019.html> and click on the live links in that copy. Questions or comments? Email me at dmc89az@gmail.com. Follow St. Luke’s on Facebook: “St. Luke’s Church Sedona AZ”.

I. Opening Prayer

WE beseech thee, O Lord, graciously to hear the prayers which we offer unto thee [remembering] thy holy Confessor and Bishop, Saint Basil: that like as he was found worthy to do thee faithful service; so by the succour of his merits we may be delivered from the bonds of the sins which we have committed. Through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**
(*Collect for the Feast of St. Basil, Anglican Missal, p. E69.*)



Saint Basil, St. John and St. Gregory

<http://communio.stblogs.org/Sts%20Basil%2C%20John%20Gregory.jpg>

II. Basil the Great – Overview

- He was born in 329 in Cappadocia to a wealthy, Christian family. His father was a lawyer
- Four(!) of the ten siblings eventually became saints.
- He and Gregory (born also in Cappadocia in 325) were well educated in Caesarea and in Athens and were – initially – good friends
- Upon leaving Athens, Basil was offered a chair at the University of Caesarea. He also practiced in his father’s law practice

- Fundamentally, at this time Basil was full of pride, and his sister Macrina – a devout Christian – called him out for his arrogance
- About that same time, Basil’s younger brother – considered the Golden Boy of the family – died unexpectedly when he went fishing. This event threw Basil into a spiritual crisis and drew him closer to the church
- He left his position at the university and turned to his sister, Marcrina, for spiritual support
- From that point forward, Basil was a fundamentally changed man: a true warrior for Christ
- Basil was impressed by the colony of women that Macrina had started, probably one of the first monasteries of that time
- He went on an extended spiritual journey and visited monastic centers in Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia
- Returning to Caesarea, he became acutely aware of the atrocities, poverty and sickness suffered by many
- In 364, the Archbishop asked him to become a priest, and he reluctantly agreed, feeling that it would help him better serve those most in need
- When the Archbishop died in 370, Basil was nominated to succeed him. The aged and dying Bishop Gregory (the father of Gregory of Nazianzus) was carried in on a stretcher to cast the deciding vote in favor of Basil
- As Archbishop, Basil was responsible for eleven provinces encompassing an area roughly equal to the area east of the Mississippi in the U.S.
- Drawing upon Macrina’s example of the community she had started, Basil became **the founder of cenobitic (i.e., communal) monasticism** – one of his most lasting heritages
- Using his own land in Caesarea, he started a community known as New Town – the influence of which cannot be overstated. The community included hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, hospices, lodging for travelers and became **the model for nearly all philanthropy and charity for centuries**
- On the spiritual side, New Town produced iconographers, writers, confessors and lecturers
- Preaching at Basil’s funeral, Gregory of Nazianzus called New Town the eighth great wonder of the world
- Basil also wrote a monastic Rule which later served as a model for the influential Rule of Benedict
- During this time, he essentially stood alone against Emperor Valens – a staunch Arian.
- Valens initially sent his envoy, Modestus, to rail against Basil with threats of banishment and even death. Basil, however, was nonplussed, and when Modestus became exasperated at Basil’s apparent nonchalance, Basil reportedly responded: “It is obvious you have never met a real Bishop”
- Valens eventually “lowered” himself to visit Basil in person. Upon being shown the wonderful works taking place in New Town, Valens claimed to be deeply impressed and promised financial support, which was never provided. Instead, he soon issued a writ of banishment against Basil
- Shortly afterward, however, Valens’ son became ill, and Valens’ wife, Dominia, asked Basil to come pray for her son, which he did – and the son recovered
- However, the son was later baptized by an Arian bishop, and he died shortly afterwards. Valens was furious, and he wrote a second writ of banishment against Basil

- Eventually, though, Valens abandoned his personal war against Basil, and Basil served as Archbishop another seven years until his death on January 1, 378 at age 49, worn out by his extreme labors, struggles and sacrifices
- In addition to being an excellent pastor, administrator and Archbishop, he was an outstanding theologian, and **his writings on the Trinity are revered today**
- His Divine Liturgy is celebrated by the Orthodox church ten times during the year (predominantly during Lent and Holy Week)
- The Orthodox say, “He is the one who opened the heavens to us”
- His Feast Day is January 1, celebrated with Vasilopita – a Greek sweet bread, often with a coin embedded (<https://stbasiloc.org/orthodoxy/vasilopita>). He is considered the patron saint of hospital administrators and monks
- He was declared to be a Doctor by Pope St. Pius V in 1568

III. Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian)

- Gregory was born in Arianza in Cappadocia, c.325, into a wealthy family. His father, also named Gregory, was converted to Christianity by his mother, Nonna, and he later became Bishop of Nazianzus
- Gregory met Basil when they were students in Caesarea, and the friendship continued during their studies in Athens
- Ironically, they were also classmates with Flavius Claudius Julianus – later known as Julian the Apostate – the last, great pagan emperor of Rome
- Gregory departed Athens in 356, age 30 or 31
- Basil, who had left Athens earlier, had returned to his native Pontus to start a monastic community
- Gregory joined him there for 2-3 years but eventually returned to Nazianzus, near his birthplace in Arianza
- During that time, Gregory restored his aging father to orthodoxy after he had signed (some say he was tricked into signing) a heretical creed
- While there, his father forced Gregory to be ordained c.361. Greatly aggrieved, Gregory fled to Basil’s monastic community but returned to Nazianzus a few weeks later
- While at Nazianzus, Basil was consecrated Bishop of Caesarea Cappadocia
- As mentioned previously, Valens was displeased at this move, so he divided Cappadocia into two provinces
- Basil – much against Gregory’s will – consecrated Gregory to serve as Bishop of the western province created by Valens
- Gregory was exceedingly unhappy there, and he eventually abandoned the diocese and returned to Nazianzus
- This, naturally, created a strain between Basil and Gregory which was never fully resolved during their lives
- Gregory’s father died in 374, and his mother also died soon afterwards. Gregory sold all his belongings (retaining a small tract of land in Arianza, his birthplace) and contributed the proceeds to the poor
- He administered the diocese at Nazianzus for about two years but refused to be consecrated Bishop
- All his life, Gregory had been drawn towards a monastic lifestyle, so he withdrew to a monastery for about 3 years
- Even so, he was persuaded to assume a bishopric in Constantinople in 379

- At the time, Constantinople was a hotbed of Arianism, so he was forced to set up a chapel in a private home, which he called the Church of the Resurrection (almost certainly intended to have a double meaning regarding the historical resurrection of the Jesus and the intended resurrection of orthodox faith in Constantinople)
- It is there that he delivered the famous **Five Theological Orations**, considered immensely important even today
- These, along with his other writings, earned him the title “**Theologian**” – a title not given to any other of the early church Fathers except the Apostle John
- **According to Eastern tradition, he is the only theologian who never wrote a single sentence containing theological error**
- Also during that time, St. Jerome became a disciple of Gregory
- In 380, Emperor Theodosius was baptized, and he decreed that all Arian bishops must subscribe to the Nicene Creed, but the Arian bishop in Constantinople refused, so Theodosius banished him
- Theodosius determined that Gregory should be Bishop of Constantinople – although he was never formally elected as such by the other bishops
- Shortly afterwards, Theodosius assembled the First Council of Constantinople, which resulted in the form of the Nicene Creed we are familiar with today (drawing upon the creed initially promulgated in 325 at the Council of Nicaea)
- Following considerable disputation and intrigue, Flavian was formally elected Bishop of Constantinople, and Gregory “resigned” his See in June 381
- He returned to Nazianzus, where he found the church to be in a miserable condition
- He overtook administration of the diocese but never formally became its Bishop. Eventually, he persuaded the Archbishop to appoint his cousin Eulalius as Bishop
- Gregory, pleased that the diocese was in good hands, withdrew to his small property at Arianza, where he spent the last six years of his life in the relatively quiet and contemplative lifestyle he had longed for all his life. **Constant public service had essentially been his cross to bear, and he bore it well**
- He died c.389, at age 64
- “Affectionate and tender by nature, of highly sensitive temperament, simple and humble, lively and cheerful by disposition, yet liable to despondency and irritability, constitutionally timid, and somewhat deficient, as it seemed, both in decision of character and in self-control, he was very human, very lovable, very gifted — yet not, one might be inclined to think, naturally adapted to play the remarkable part which he did during the period preceding and following the opening of the Council of Constantinople. He entered on his difficult and arduous work in that city within a few months of the death of Basil, the beloved friend of his youth; and [Cardinal] Newman, in his appreciation of Gregory's character and career, suggests the striking thought that it was his friend's lofty and heroic spirit which had entered into him, and inspired him to take the active and important part which fell to his lot in the work of re-establishing the orthodox and Catholic faith in the eastern capital of the empire.” (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07010b.htm>)
- His Feast Day is June 14, the day of his consecration to the See of Caesarea Cappadocia, and he is considered the patron saint of harvests and poets
- He was declared a Doctor of the Church, along with St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom and St. Athanasius by Pope St. Pius V in 1568

IV. Looking Back

- 298 – 373 Athanasius
- 309 – 347 John Chrysostom
- 325 – 389 Gregory of Nazianzus
- 329 – 378 Basil the Great
- 340 – 397 Ambrose
- 342 – 420 Jerome
- 354 – 430 Augustine of Hippo
- 540 – 604 Gregory the Great
- Nearly all desired nothing but to live quiet contemplative lives, but they were called – sometimes thrust – into public service
- They lived lives marked by
 - Voluntary poverty
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Humility
 - Devotion to Scripture
 - Charity and service
 - Voluminous writings and correspondence
- They often stood alone, or nearly alone, against Emperors, hostile Bishops and hostile crowds
- They defended the faith against heresies – particularly the Arian heresy – and developed a body of writing and a vocabulary which serve as the bedrock of our theology and faith today
- Like the Apostles, they were imperfect men deeply devoted to God at whatever cost
- Saints and Doctors such as these gave proof in their time to Jesus’ promises that the Holy Spirit would guide the Church into all truth (John 16:13) **and** that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)
- **It is important to remember in these tumultuous times – a period which some now refer to as post-Christian – that Jesus’ promises are just as true today as when He first spoke them**

V. Closing Prayer

O GOD, by whose providence blessed Gregory was sent to guide thy people in the way of everlasting salvation: grant, we beseech thee, that as we have learned of him the doctrine of life on earth, so we may be found worthy to have him for our advocate in heaven. Through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.** (*from Mass 13, Common of Doctors, Anglican Missal, pp. F26-7.*)

VI. Sources

Catholic Encyclopedia: St. Basil the Great (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02330b.htm>)

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Schaff, P. (ed.) *The Complete Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Collection of Early Church Fathers: Cross-Linked to the Bible. Kindle Edition*. Amazon Digital Services 2016.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Theological Orations

Oration XXVII (The First Theological Oration – A Preliminary Discourse Against the Eunomians) (<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.iii.xiii.html>)

Oration XXVIII (The Second Theological Oration)
(<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.iii.xiv.html>)

Oration XXIX (The Third Theological Oration – On the Son)
(<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.iii.xv.html>)

Oration XXX (The Fourth Theological Oration – Which is the Second Concerning the Son)
(<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.iii.xvi.html>)

Oration XXXI (The Fifth Theological Oration – On the Holy Spirit)
(<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.iii.xvii.html>)

St. Basil the Great on YouTube

Coffee with Sr. Vassa Ep. 36 (Basil the Great)

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25WYd1CweWw&list=PLQ9-50qJL_DZ2Z4nOOytwR-sA9r5Orrvc&index=8) (12 minutes)

The Lives of the Saints: Basil the Great

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqN5_vvsfuc&list=PLQ9-50qJL_DZ2Z4nOOytwR-sA9r5Orrvc&index=1) (28 minutes)

“What’s So ‘Great’ about Basil?” with Mike Aquilina and Matthew Leonard) (14+ minutes)

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St. Gregory of Nazianzus on YouTube

St. Gregory of Nazianzus – The Doctors of the Church with Dr. Matthew Bunson

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fhvldnf2Zg&list=PLQ9-50qJL_DZ2Z4nOOytwR-sA9r5Orrvc&index=2) (28 minutes)

The Holy Spirit: St. Gregory the Theologian

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sVOdxyev4c&list=PLQ9-50qJL_DZ2Z4nOOytwR-sA9r5Orrvc&index=4) (4 minutes)

"The Theologian": Mike Aquilina & Matthew Leonard discuss Gregory of Nazianzus

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jH14WUW8Ok&list=PLQ9-50qJL_DZ2Z4nOOytwR-sA9r5Orrvc&index=5) (9 minutes)

Theological Orations (Full Audio Book) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPfDFsNZdcQ>) (4 hours)

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