



# PI MONAKHOS THE MONK

## ΠΙ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ

A monthly newsletter with monastic issues for today's youth

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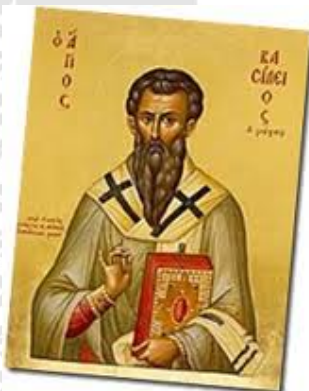
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## *The Love of God as the fulfillment of all the commandments*

*By: St Basil the Great*



The love of God is not something that is taught, for we do not learn from another to rejoice in the light or to desire life, nor has anyone taught us to love our parents or nurses. In the same way and even to a far greater degree it is true that instruction in divine law is not from without, but, simultaneously with the formation of the creature—man, I mean—a kind of rational force was implanted in us like a seed, which by an inherent tendency, impels us toward love. This gem is then received into account in the school of God's commandments,

where it is wont to be carefully cultivated and skillfully nurtured and thus, by the grace of God, brought to its full perfection. Wherefore, we, also, approving your zeal as essential for reaching the goal, shall endeavor with the help of God and the support of your prayers and as power is given us by the Spirit, to enkindle the spark of divine love latent within you.

Now, it is necessary to know that, although this is only one virtue, yet, by its efficacy, it comprises and fulfills every commandment. "If anyone love me," says the Lord, "he will keep my commandments." (Jn 14:23) And again: "On these two commandments dependent the whole law and the prophets." (Mat 22:40). Yet, we shall not undertake at this time to carry our discourse to its complete development (for in so doing, we should, inadvertently, make our discussion of one portion of the commandments embrace a full treatment of them), but, insofar as it is fitting and relevant to the present purpose, we shall exhort you regarding the love we owe to God.

First, however, we shall establish the fact that we have already received from God the power to fulfill all the commandments given us



by Him, so that we may not take our obligation in bad part, as though something quite strange and unexpected were being asked of us, and that we may not become filled with conceit, as if we were paying back something more than had been given us. By means of this power, rightly and properly used, we pass our entire lives holily and virtuously, but through a perverted use of it we gradually fall prey to vice. Now, this is the definition of vice: *the wrong use, in violation of the Lord's command, of what has been given us by God for a good purpose*. Similarly, the definition of the virtue which God requires of us is: *the use with a good conscience of these same gifts in accordance with the Lord's command*. This being the case, we shall apply the same principle also to charity. Having received, therefore, a command to love God, we have possessed the innate power of loving from the first moment of our creation. Of this, no external proof is required, since anyone can discover it of himself and within himself. We are by nature desirous of beautiful things, even though individual conceptions of the beautiful differ widely.

Furthermore, we possess—without being taught—a love for those who are near and dear to us, and we spontaneously render to our benefactors a full measure of good will. Now, what is more admirable than Divine Beauty? What reflection is sweeter than the thought of the magnificence of God? What desire of the soul is so poignant and so intolerably keen as that desire implanted by God in a soul purified from all vice and affirming with sincerity, “I languish with love.” Totally ineffable and indescribable are the lightning flashes of Divine Beauty. Words do not adequately convey nor is the ear capable of receiving knowledge of them. The rays of the morning star, or the brightness of the moon, or the light of comparison with that splendor and these heavenly bodies are more inferior to the true light than is the deep darkness of night, gloomy and moonless, to brightest noonday.

This Beauty, invisible to the eyes of the flesh, is apprehended by the mind and soul alone. Whenever it cast its light upon any of the saints, it left them with an intolerable pain of longing, and they would say, weary of life on earth: “Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged,” “when shall I come and appear before the face of God?” and again: “to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better” also: “my soul bath thirsted after the strong living God” and “Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord.” Since they felt the burden of this present life as an imprisonment, they were scarcely able to contain themselves under the impulses which the touch of Divine Love had made to stir within their souls. Indeed, by reason of their insatiable eagerness to enjoy the vision of Divine Beauty, they prayed that contemplation of the joy of the Lord would last as long as the whole of eternal life. Men are by nature, then, desirous of beauty. But, that which is truly beautiful and desirable is the good. Now, the good is God, and, since all creatures desire good, therefore, all creatures desire God.

*(From St Basil's Long Rules)*



Fr Moussa Al Antouny with a group of youth from QLD



A group of Girls from St Mark's Church



## St Basil the Great

By: Fr Anthony St Shenouda



One of the great church fathers of the 4th century is St Basil the bishop of Caesarea. He has no comprehensive biography, yet from what we know about him in the funerary oration by St Gregory of Nyssa (his brother) and by St Gregory of Nazianzus (his best friend) and his extensive volume of writings and monastic rules we can appreciate the depth of spirituality and its relevance to our lives today sixteen hundred years later.

St Basil's Christian formation as a young man has been highly influenced by his family members. Nearly all of his family members are canonized saints in the Orthodox Church. His grand mother Macrina the elder, his mother Emmelia, his sister St Macrina the younger who was a leader of a women's monastic community, and as we mentioned his brother Gregory the bishop of Nyssa, and his other brother Peter bishop of Sebasteia. Similar holy families have come up in later church history, for example in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries we have Awlad el Assal (sons of Asaal) who presented to the Coptic church a great library of Arabic Christian literature. Also early in the twentieth century we have

the family of Fr abd el Masih Salib el Masoudi, who was the spiritual father of pope Kyrillos VI. At least five members of his family from three generations were monks or nuns, some of whom were well renowned for their scholarly works and writings.

The main reason for my admiration of this great saint is his outstanding success in every stage of his life. As a young man he went to Athens to receive his education in Greek literature, rhetoric, and philosophy, under the most famous teachers. It was at this time that he met with his life long soul mate, St Gregory who was to become the bishop of Nazianzus. During this time he was one of the very successful students, as a contemporary writer describes him:

Who, owing to his character, was less in need of education? Yet who, even with his character, was so imbued with learning? What branch of learning did he not traverse; and that with unexampled success, passing through all, as no one else passed through any one of them... .Who had such power in Rhetoric, which breathes with the might of fire, different as his disposition was from that of rhetoricians? Who in Grammar, which perfects our tongues in Greek and compiles history, and presides over meters and legislates for poems? Who in Philosophy, that really lofty and high reaching science, whether practical and speculative... .



After St Basil was reprimanded by his sister Macrina (who by then was an elder of a women's monastic community) about devoting too much time to secular learning and not enough time to God, he decided to go to the desert to lead a monastic life. During this time he excelled in the monastic virtues (Obedience, Chastity, Poverty). His devotion to the ascetic life attracted many more young men who wanted to live under his care. Eventually he felt the need to organize a monastic community whose rules we have until today.

While in the desert, he kept in contact with his other best friend St John Chrysostom. As the fight against the Arian heresy grew stronger so did the eyes of the church hierarchs to ordain them priest to help them in these hard times. They both made an agreement that they either both take on the priesthood or both refuse. St John sent a letter nominating St Basil to the episcopate, without any intention to be ordained himself. St Basil reluctantly accepted the nomination on the grounds that St John has also accepted the episcopacy. When St Basil found out about the plot he exchanged letters with his friend, which is the greatest text of all times that describes the responsibilities and unworthiness of St Basil on one side and St John's reply about the glory and blessings of the priesthood. Again while a bishop St Basil was a very successful pastor and preacher. We learn from his writings the great revival in the building of hospitals and his work for the poor who were being imprisoned and abused by landlords. On the theological front he was a great opponent to the Arian heresy and in keeping the Nicene Orthodox faith.

In short, the life of St Basil was like that of Joseph in the Old Testament and the same could be said about him, "The Lord was with [Basil] and he was a successful man." The circumstances around him did not hinder him from glorifying God in his success in all aspects of life, his study, his ascetic life and his Episcopal calling. May his life remain as an example for all of us today.





## Miracles Of St Basil



*The Commemoration of the Miracle performed by St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, Cappadocia.*

A young man, who loved his master's daughter, Satan, his enemy and the enemy of the human race, deceived him. Satan made him resort to a magician who made him write a covenant to deny the faith and to surrender completely to Satan, so that Satan might grant him his wish. Satan kindled lust in the heart of the girl, and she loved the young man exceedingly. She asked her father insistingly not to object to her marriage to that young man. Eager for his honor and fearing for her life, he married her to him. When she had spent with him a long period of time, she noticed that he did not enter the church or partake of the Holy Sacraments, or make the sign of the Holy Cross over himself. She revealed to him her doubt about his faith

and his love of God. He told her what had happened to him, and how he had written to Satan a covenant of obedience till death.

She cried much and rebuked him for his deed. She took him to St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea. He listened to the confession of the young man and saw his grief and desire to go back to the life of worship, fellowship, and righteousness. St. Basil comforted him and asked him to stay with him for a while in seclusion, fasting and praying. He shut him up in a nearby room for three days.

On the third day St. Basil visited him and the young man told him that the evil spirits had not ceased disturbing and fighting him in many ways. He strengthened him, calmed him down, gave him food and prayed for him. St. Basil asked him to remain in seclusion, praying and fasting. After a few days, he came back to visit him again. The young man told St. Basil that he did not see the devils any more, but he still heard their cries and threats. St. Basil fed him again and prayed for him and left him to the life of seclusion to fight and pray, and the bishop went to pray on his behalf also. And this went on until 40 days were completed. When the Saint came to him and asked him about his state, he told the Saint that he saw him (the Saint) fighting against Satan on his behalf, and he vanquished him and finally was victorious.

The Bishop gathered all the priests and the monks and prayed for the young man all that night. On the following morning he led him into the church while everyone was crying, "Lord have mercy on us," and they continued to cry out until that writing, which the young man had written as a covenant to deny the faith and to surrender to Satan, fell down in the midst of all the people.



The Bishop, the young man and his wife, and all the people rejoiced exceedingly. The Bishop blessed that man and administered to him the Holy Sacraments. The man and his wife departed to their house full of joy for the peace and repentance they received. They praised God and thanked St. Basil by whose prayers they were saved.

*The blessings of his prayers be with us all, and Glory be to our God forever. Amen.*

*(Coptic Synaxarium - The Thirteenth Day of the Blessed Month of Tute)*



Above: St Abraam Girls at the monastery



Left: Boys from St Barbara Church Spending a retreat at the monastery



# *The Crucified Jesus*

By: Fr Menassa Youhanna

**Now Available**

## *The* **CRUCIFIED JESUS**



By: Fr. Menassa Youhanna

In the wilderness, Moses the prophet observed the thorn bush unharmed by the flames of fire, he said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight," and God called to him out of the midst of the thorn bush, and said, "Do not come near here. Pull off your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground," (Ex 3: 2-5).

As you draw near this awesome sight of The Crucified Jesus, dear reader, stand in reverence and sever all your worldly attachments. Prepare for the outpouring of grace that will come upon you from the cross.

Gaze toward the cross as toward the spring of your salvation, the source of your deliverance, the root of your happiness in this present life, and the assurance of attainment of eternal glory in the coming one.

*The Crucified Jesus* is a 20th century classic that has finally made available in the English language. It is a group of contemplation on the events that took place during Holy Week. The last chapter has contemplations of the last words of Jesus on the Cross. This books makes a great read during the Lent fast.

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