

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

EPISTLE: Hebrews 13:17-21

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:14-19

FESTAL HYMNS

TROPARION TONE 1

The three great luminaries of the One Divinity, portrayed as three suns, set the universe aflame with their rays of divine teaching. They are rivers of wisdom, flowing like honey, streams of divine knowledge whose waters nourish the Universe. They are Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and the renowned John from whose tongue words flowed like gold. Let us all who are devoted to their teachings join together in hymns and honor them, for they shall ever intercede for us before the Holy Trinity. [Narthex Press Translation]

KONTAKION TONE 2

O Lord, you have taken up to their eternal rest and to the enjoyment of Your good things the holy preachers of divine truths and leaders of teachers for You have accepted their struggles and pains in preference to any holocaust, O You Who alone glorify Your saints!

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs was instituted during the reign of Alexis I Comnenus (1081-1118). A dispute arose in Constantinople among various prominent citizens and clergy, about which of the three Fathers - Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, or St John Chrysostom - was the greatest. In typically Byzantine fashion, the people of the City joined into the dispute, which became more animated, dividing the populace into three hostile factions styling themselves Basilians, Gregorians and Joannites. At last, desiring to restore peace to the City and the Church, the three holy hierarchs themselves appeared to the monk John Mauropus; they revealed to him that they stand together in harmony and in equal glory before the heavenly throne, and instructed him to compose a common service for the three of them. Saint John (Mauropus) obeyed, and chose January 30 as the date of the commemoration, since each of the three hierarchs is commemorated separately in January.

Taken from "God is Wonderful in His Saints" www.geocities.com/abbamoses.
Webmaster- John Brady.

ST. BASIL THE GREAT

Born-330AD. Died-379. Feastday-January 1. One of ten children, five, plus mother and grandmother are saints in the Orthodox Church. Educated in the best pagan and Christian culture of his day.

Spent time as a monk until 364 when he left the monastery to defend the Church against the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of the Son, and the Pneumatomachi who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

In 370 he was appointed Bishop of Caesarea, which he served for the rest of his life. As a preacher of social justice in society, he provided a model for organized Church philanthropy. He built a series of buildings near the church, including hospitals, housing for the poor, travelers, and orphanages.

A few of St. Basil's most important writings include: "*Treatise on the Holy Spirit*," three "*Books Against Eunomius*" (Arianism), *The Hexameron* (on the six days of creation), *RULE OF ST. BASIL* – Monastic Guidelines that are still used today. *LITURGY OF ST. BASIL* - wrote numerous priestly prayers. He was the first to distinguish between 'ousia' [essence] and 'hypostasis' [manor of being of each Person of the Trinity].

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Born-347. Died-407. Feastdays-January 2 & November 13. He is one of the best-known Church Fathers and greatest of all Christian writers. Educated as a lawyer, he was called to be a monk at a very early age. He cared for his mother Anthusa until she died. During that time he studied Scriptures and science as it relates to theology.

In 373 he left Antioch to become a hermit; in 386, ordained a priest. From 386-98 he was a great preacher/orator and given the name "Golden Mouth" / Chrysostom. 800 of his sermons have survived. He used 18,000 Old and New Testament quotes from memory. His sermons offer a colorful picture of ecclesiastical, political, social and cultural conditions in the capitols of Syria and Byzantium. His moral discourses give us practical applications with spiritual meanings. His works include *On Virginity* and *Concerning the Education of Children*. *On the Priesthood* is his best know treatise.

At age 49, in 398, St. John was elected Archbishop of Constantinople. His honesty and asceticism brought him exile twice. He is remembered for his holiness, preaching, exegesis of various books of the Bible and Liturgical reform. The Divine Liturgy used most often bears his name.

ST GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS / THE THEOLOGIAN

Born-326. Died-389. Feastday-January 25. His incorruptible relics are fragrant today. His parents were Bishop Gregory and the pious Nonna.

Bishop Gregory ordained him to the priesthood. He was later ordained a bishop. After his parents died he continued serving the church in Nazianzos.

Ordained Archbishop of Constantinople at the height of the Arian heresy. His homilies, which were recorded by a stenographer, brought thousands back to Orthodox Christianity each week. As a result, the Arians persecuted him. Once the Arians were banished from the capitol, he fought the Macedonian heresy - the Holy Spirit is not divine.

He played a vital role in the 2nd Ecumenical Council. St. Gregory expressed incomprehensible truths with a clear understanding and strict correctness, and thus was given the title "Theologian and Universal Teacher." He wrote 45 orations, 5 theological orations, and feastday sermons. Many of his sermons were poetic and have been put to music. In his retirement he composed 400 poems.

The Three Hierarchs addressed the concerns of their day – both theologically and pastorally. What they taught has been our guide for 1600 years. They continue to be relative to us and they charge us with passing on their legacy to our children and grandchildren.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Come to Church to celebrate the Feast day in Church as a family, if not on the day itself due to work, then at least on the eve of the Feast if Vespers is offered.
2. As a family, read the **Historical Background** to learn more about these "Teachers of the Church." Adapt the text to the children's age.
3. If you have an icon of the Three Hierarchs, display it in your family's place of prayer.
4. Discuss the icon on this leaflet with your children.
5. On the day of the Feast, use the Troparion and Kontakion hymns as prayers before and/or after meals and as part of evening prayers.

THE ICON

Saint Basil the Great - on the extreme left; robed in bishop's vestments: sticharion (the dresslike garment); epitachelion (the stole worn around the neck, extending down in the front almost to the ground); epigonation (diamond shaped, hanging from the right hip); phelonion (long capelike overgarment); he is depicted with black hair and a long black beard.

Saint Gregory the Theologian - on the extreme right; robed in bishop's vestments; he is depicted with white hair and a rounded white beard.

Saint John Chrysostom - central figure; robed in bishop's vestments; he is depicted with brown hair and a short brown beard.

Taken from *THE ICON BOOK*, by Boojamra, Essey, McLuckie & Matusiak.

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SYNAXIS OF THE THREE HIERARCHS

Celebrated on January 30