

Celebrating Our Deep Faith

Byzantine Catholic Worship: Our Church, Its Customs and Rich Heritage

Basil ~ Great Archbishop of the Church

ON JANUARY 1, the beginning of the civil year, our Church celebrates the memory of the death of one of the greatest and most outstanding Father of the Church and doctors of the faith and of monastic legislators — St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea, Cappadocia, of Asia Minor (329-379). His person is in every respect extraordinary, noble, illustrious and worthy of praise. He was not only an aristocrat by birth, but also an aristocrat in spirit, character, learning and holiness. The mark of his deep faith, heroic love of God and neighbour, learning and holiness is stamped on the entire Church of Christ, on the monastic life in the East and on our people.



The French author, Jean Rivier, in his book St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea says of him, "St. Basil is one of the most illustrious and renowned figures of the ancient Greek Church. His contemporaries had already conferred upon him the title 'the Great'...he is an ascetic by calling and a man of action by nature...His rule become the code of monastic life in the East, as did the rule of St. Benedict in the West...He is an ascetic, bishop, orator, theologian and scholar. He, without the least doubt, is the most perfect representative of the Church of his times...His life was in complete harmony with his learning, or to put it more clearly, his learning was nothing else than a reflection of his life."

Small wonder then, that the Church justifiably gave him the title "the Great." He is truly "great" especially in three areas of his life: as a great archbishop of the Church; as a great legislator of monastic life; and as a man of great holiness.

From Basil's deep faith arose his other outstanding trait — his sacrificial love of God and neighbour. Sacrifice is the language of love. In Basil, this language of sacrifice was very strong, eloquent and active. His love, ever vigilant, sensitive, open, and all-embracing impelled him to be ever ready to assist either friend or foe. For the destitute, the aged, the sick, the outcast, orphans and widows, he established large charitable institutions which formed, as it were, a separated city near Caesarea; in his honour it is called "The Basiliade."

Fr. Julian J Katrij, OSBM

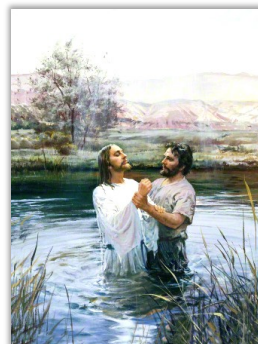
Kontakion of St. Basil, Tone 4

*You have appeared as a firm foundation for the Church,
maintaining its authority as a sure refuge for mortals,
sealing it by your doctrine, O venerable Basil, revealer of heaven.*

The Role of St. John the Baptist

The greatest act of John the Baptist is his baptism of the Lord Christ.

HERE WE SEE two great situations of humility. The first is the coming of Christ to be baptized by His servant John. The second is that great prophet saying to the Lord: "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14).



All the greatness that surrounded John, and all the tremendous popularity which he had, did not make him forget the insignificance of himself before Christ. He did like his mother Elizabeth when she said to the Holy Virgin: "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).

John said to the Lord: "I need to be baptized by You". And the Lord did not say to him that He did not need to be, but instead: "Permit it to be so now" (Matt. 3:15), which is an astonishing expression from the mouth of the Lord, and is addressed to one of His servants. He said to him, tenderly and

gently: "I do not command you, but I ask for your permission, I ask for your agreement...in order to fulfill all righteousness..."

This saint did not seek his own glory, but he sought Christ and the kingdom of God.

He understood that "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:8), "that all through him might believe" (John 1:7). He knew that he was simply a predecessor before the convoy of the coming king; all his work consisted of preparing the way for the king. John was able to keep his ritual, and not to trespass over his limits.

For him, selfishness was dead; and Christ was all in all.

That is a lesson to the servants who build themselves at the account of service, or to them who consider service as a simple field where they can manifest themselves! The most marvelous word that exhibits John's service, is his word about Christ: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). He also said about Him: "He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:31). Thereby he indicates the divinity of Christ, because He came from heaven, therefore He is above all, including also John.

Hence, when the predication of Christ had begun and started to sway the atmosphere of service, John rejoiced and was glad (John 3:29). He said: "Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This is how my own happiness is made complete."

from The Epiphany and St. John the Baptist, July 1999

Finding God In the Falling Snow

By Msgr. Charles Pope

NOT EVERYONE LIKES SNOW, but it *is* an amazing work of God. He takes a barren winter landscape and creates it anew. I can almost hear the Lord saying, “Behold, I make all things new!”

In the modern world, we often walk past the glory of God hardly noticing the gifts that He provides every day. Tonight, and tomorrow I don’t want to miss God’s gifts. It is true that these gifts come along with weather-related hardships, but maybe — just maybe — God can get a few of us to stop for just a minute, rest a while, and behold His glory.



Getting “snowed in” provides a wonderful chance to become reacquainted with our family and even with our very selves. Just looking out the window and marvelling at the snow as it falls with hypnotic and calming steadiness can be a prayer, if we think of God who sends it. Wherever you are, don’t walk through life and miss the glory of God!

In the Book of Sirach there is a beautiful and poetic description of God and the majestic work He creates even in the “dead” of winter. Enjoy this excerpt from Sirach 43 and reflect spiritually on the glory of God in winter.

- * *A word from God drives on the north wind.*
- * *He scatters frost like so much salt;*
- * *It shines like blossoms on the thornbush.*
- * *Cold northern blasts He sends that turn the ponds to lumps of ice.*
- * *He freezes over every body of water,*
- * *And clothes each pool with a coat of mail.*
- * *He sprinkles the snow like fluttering birds.*
- * *Its shining whiteness blinds the eyes,*
- * *The mind is baffled by its steady fall.*



In the Midst of Winter

by Cal Wick



Lord, in the midst of Winter, when the days are cold
and wind can pierce, remind us of the warmth of Your love.
In the midst of Winter, when days are short, dawn comes late,
and dusk arrives early, remind us that in the darkness Your light still shines.
In the midst of Winter, when the flowers of spring still lie hidden in the earth,
when leaves are off the trees, and the world can seem bleak
remind us that Easter is but a short time away.
And when in our lives we feel as if we are experiencing a season of winter,
reach out to us with the power of Your resurrection
so that we may feel the warmth of Your love and see Your light
that alone can take away the darkness of our soul. *Amen.*

January Symbolism: Its Birthstone and Flower



ACCORDING TO LEGEND, the month of January was named after the Roman god Janus for his ability to turn one face to reflect upon the past and a yet another face freshly pointed upon the future. Secularly speaking, January marks the new civil year for us humans -- a new beginning. In the Roman Church Calendar, it is also the beginning of Ordinary Time.

As Byzantine Catholics, we continue (as do many Roman rite Catholics) to rejoice and celebrate Christ's coming at Bethlehem and in our hearts. We have the glorious feasts of the Circumcision of our Lord (His naming) and St. Basil the Great (both on January 1), the Feast of the Theophany -- the Baptism of Our Lord on January 6, at which occasion water is blessed and made holy for our use. For others, Christmas decorations are taken down shortly thereafter, and the season sadly comes to a close; but we continue to sing Christmas carols until February 1 — the day before the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord into the Temple (February 2).

But did you know that January's birthstone, *garnet*, and flower, *carnation*, both have Christian symbolism? Let's consider first the birthstone. The garnet is a semi-precious stone whose energies govern the month of January. The term garnet comes from the Latin *granatus* which means “seed-like”. January is all about sowing seeds (ideas, goals, New Year's resolutions, etc.) and nurturing them throughout the year. The garnet comes in many colours, but it's most commonly admired in bright sanguine, crimsons and cheerful reds. This, too, is a correlation. The month of January sparks of a procession of increasing light (for the northern hemisphere). With each passing day after the winter solstice (in December) we begin to see the light of the sun linger longer in our views. The garnet is a reminder of the return of the Light of Christ into our spiritual life, as well as a poignant reminder of the brilliant seeds we will sow and see to fruition this year.



As for the carnation, it has a long symbolic history of representing remembrance, innocence, faith and tenderness. In Christian myth and legend, the carnation is sometimes referred to as “the rejoicing flower” because ancient rumour holds the carnation was first seen on earth at the time of Christ's birth. When one considers the word carnation comes from the Latin root *carnis* which means “flesh” (as in the flesh-colour of the flower), this connection becomes stronger. It also ties in with the body of Christ made manifest on Earth, and births a whole realm of symbolic meanings, such as blooming consciousness, unfolding the petals of potential in this physical form, breathing new life into the world, germinating a heightened sense of love and compassion. The carnation has been around for more than 2000 years and has been utilized to lift one's spirits for almost as long in homeopathic/medicinal circles. Teas, tinctures, and foods have been crafted with carnations as a spice – all to enhance the mood and reduce melancholy. Give it a try yourself. If the January chill gives you the blues, snatch up a bouquet of carnations from your local florist. They are relatively inexpensive, and they are guaranteed to lift your spirits on the gloomiest winter day.

Source: Internet