

anyway. She would rather say that the Church is the place to be, both for those who are truly faithful and for those whose faith is still in need of growth and strengthening.

Hannah's son Samuel was to be one who would hear the voice of the Lord, even when the great Eli could not hear it. He was to be one of the great ones of the Old Testament. But in order for that to happen, his mother had to be willing to give him up. She had to be ready to leave him in an environment that many of us might consider too unsavory for our beloved offspring. She had to be prepared to let God's will, rather than her own, be done in his life right from the time of his babyhood.

Does all of this have a familiar ring? Aren't we all well acquainted with another of the women of God who let His will be done to her son, a son not only hers but at the same time the divine Son of God? Yes, there are many parallels between Hannah and the Mother of God, Mary. The most basic of these is one we are all called to share. We find it in the Lord's Prayer, where we all say to God, "Thy will be done." If we want examples of what that really means, we need only look to the Virgin Mary and her Old Testament predecessor, Hannah, the mother of Samuel.



## ST. BASIL THE GREAT

*This month the Armenian Church celebrates the feast day of the great St. Basil of Caesarea.*

Imagine coming from a family of ten kids: five boys and five girls, and four of the ten later recognized as saints! No fable; St. Basil was born to a wealthy young Christian couple in Caesarea and lived in a large mansion with servants and all of those advantages belonging to a family of position in those ancient times.

His paternal grandmother, Macrina, was a woman of great wealth and position, too. It was between the

grandmother and his mother, Emmelia, that St. Basil learned the Bible and classic education. His father, Basil, taught the family in the use of reason, reading and writing. "Of what use is it to read and write if you can't think and reason?" he often said.

To further his education, his parents sent Basil off to Athens; Athens! the city which taunted Christians and called them barbarians and enemies of Hellenism, people, they said who "worshipped a Jew." Perhaps because of that added pressure, Basil and his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus (also to become a saint) stuck to their studies and avoided all of the theater entertainment, the drinking and "extra-curricular" activities loved by the other students.

Among their fellow students was a young man by the name of Julian, the same one who would become the Emperor and an apostate from Christianity.

Basil finished his studies and returned home. His older sister, Macrina (named after Grandma) thought he was a little conceited and saw her other brother, Gregory in the same light. She kept after him and encouraged him to seek more than the honors of scholarship and finally, when Basil was 28, she convinced him to accept baptism. He immediately decided to become a monk. For two years, he traveled across Egypt, through Syria and Palestine learning and observing the monastics. He returned to Caesarea and established a monastery for men and across the river of Isis, he established one for his mother and sister—the first monastery in Asia Minor.

He convinced his friend Gregory of Nazianzus to join, even over the objections of his father who was also a bishop. St. Basil thought it not sufficient for the monks to live holy lives but they must also do good works. He founded orphanages, schools and educated monks to be teachers. He ruled for 5 years and then went to battle for the faith against Julian who upheld Arius the heretic. Julian added taxes, confiscated property and persecuted the Christians in Cappadocia for their support of Orthodox Christianity.

Basil became the right hand of the Bishop and spent much time with the poor. He set up a soup-kitchen and himself served those who came, Christian, Jew and pagan. In time, he had to put aside his apron and put on the robes of the metropolitan of Caesarea.

Basil was a true shepherd to his flock and was very strict with his clergy. He could chide the wealthy and bring them to give to the support of the poor. "While your tongue excuses, your hand condemns," he said. "The price of the ring on your finger declares you to be a liar. Give your last loaf of bread to the poor and trust in God!"

Worn out with effort and zeal for the Gospel, Basil died at the age of 49.

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