

05/01/2021

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco: Reflection for the Feast of Saint Basil and the New Year



Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Happy New Year!

I greet each of you with prayers for joy, peace, health, and all the blessings of God in this new year. We begin 2021 with the challenges of the last year, the pandemic, the economic crisis, and the social unrest and anxiety. As much as we might want to put these difficulties behind us, unfortunately, we cannot. But the New Year always fills us with hope. The ultimate source of our hope is the Lord Himself. As the Psalmist says, ***“For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from Him.”*** (Psalm 62:5) and in another place, he says, ***“For you O Lord are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.”*** (Psalm 71:5).

Practical signs of hope are appearing before us. The news of the vaccine to protect us from the coronavirus and the growing number of people being vaccinated means that we are in the beginning stages of the end of the pandemic. It will take time for life to return to normal, for easier travel, to attend large events, to be able

to visit our friends and families, and to recover from the damage that the pandemic has caused to so many, but we are also a resilient and resourceful people and we will recover. As Saint Basil the Great noted about humanity, we possess “ingenuity” to solve problems (*On the Origin of Humanity, Discourse 1*). This optimism, this hope, and ingenuity may also inspire us to work towards resolving many of our long-standing societal problems.

And, it seems that it will not be too long before our parishes can resume their lives, once again offering the programs and the ministries that mean so much to people and that draw us to the Church. But even these will take time to resume to normalcy, since many require planning and organization, usually months in advance. Our enthusiasm to restart our lives must be tempered with realism and patience as we begin this year.

We can use this period of re-entry to normalcy as an opportunity to also re-assess our lives and make commitments and plans to new ways of living as Christians. Consider a new approach to making your new year’s resolutions. We can turn to the saints of our Church as models so that we may strive to imitate their examples. On this first day of the new year, our Church commemorates one of the finest models for us: Saint Basil the Great. We know him for his many charitable and philanthropic acts, whether it be the tradition of the Vasilopita or the creation of the hospitals and orphanages. We also know him as one of the greatest theologians of our Faith, addressing many of the doctrinal issues of his era, ultimately teaching us, as a hymn for the day states, “**to worship and adore the Holy Trinity correctly.**” He organized and regulated communal monasteries and developed the Liturgy that bears his name. For these reasons and many others, he is one of the Three Great Hierarchs of our Church.

In the face of so many amazing accomplishments, what can we hope to imitate from the life of Saint Basil? To paraphrase a hymn of Vespers for his feast, his way of life “**radiated sincerity.**” We can unite our words and our deeds so that they conform to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Like this great saint did in his life, we can cultivate faith and learning, worship and prayer, charity and philanthropy in our lives.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, this year we begin the third decade of the twenty-first century. Saint Basil the Great lived seventeen centuries ago. Yet, his life and example still resonate for us because the challenges that existed in his world still exist in ours – poverty, inequality, oppression, and confusion in religious ideas. We

have inherited his legacy and must cultivate it for the life of the world today.

May God's blessings be upon all those who celebrate their Feast on this day, and I wish you all a New Year filled with health, happiness and joy!

Kali Hronia! Hronia Polla!

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