

### **Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord/St. Basil**

The eighth day plays an important role in the Bible in salvation history. As we hear in today's reading from the Gospel of St. Luke, it was a commandment from God, that every male child of Israel would be circumcised on the eighth day. This marked the child's entrance into the people of Israel and a sign in the flesh of God's covenant with His people. It was on the eighth day also that the child received his name. Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day, like His Jewish brethren, and received His name also on this day. This was the beginning of His fulfilling of the entire Jewish Law starting with circumcision. Also, He received His name, Jesus, on this day to begin fulfilling that which His name means, "Yahweh saves" or "God saves."

In the New Testament, Jesus rises from the tomb on the third day, but it is also as the Church Fathers tell us, the Eighth day of Creation. This is the day that the New Creation of God begins, our deification in Christ. Baptism now takes the place of circumcision and marks our entrance into the Body of Christ, the Church. Many ancient baptismal fonts had 8 sides to remind us of this symbolism. In our Orthodox tradition, it is also customary to name a newborn child on the eighth day, giving them their Christian name, marking the beginning of their personal journey into union with Christ.

We also celebrate another great name in the Church today, that of St. Basil the Great, who compiled the Divine Liturgy we celebrate every Sunday during the Great Fast and on certain feast days during the year. St. Basil, whose name means "king" did indeed follow the king Christ in his life. He came from a family of Saints, four of his nine brothers and sisters became Saints, as well as his mother, Emilia. During his time as Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, he founded orphanages, homes for the destitute and poor, men's and women's monasteries and many churches. When threatened with torture and death from the Arian emperor, Valens, St. Basil's faith showed forth in his response, "All this, – replied Basil, – for me means nothing, since one cannot be deprived of possessions that one does not have, beyond some old worn-out clothing and some books, which comprises the entirety of my wealth. For me it would not be exile, since I am bound to no particular place, and this place in which I now dwell is not mine, and indeed any place whither I be cast shalt be mine.....And what tortures can ye do me? – I am so weak, that merely but the very first blow will be felt. Death for me would be an act of kindness: it wilt bring me all the sooner to God, for Whom I live and do labour, and to Whom moreover I do strive." Holy Father, St. Basil pray to Christ for us that our faith would be as great as yours! Amen!