

CELEBRATION OF THE 1600th ANNIVERSARY (379-1979) OF THE DEATH OF
BASIL THE GREAT

ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL CONVENTION AT PENDELI
(Athens 14-17 October 1979)

Following a suggestion made by Professor Panayotis Christou, Director of the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies in Thessaloniki, to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and to the Church of Greece, the occasion arose for Orthodox and generally Christian services and scholarly meetings to be held all over the world in honour of the memory of Basil the Great, and also for the thorough study of the multifarious works of this great Greek Father of the Church.

As far as we know, scholarly symposia have been organised during the whole of this year: in Thessaloniki, by the Holy See of Thessaloniki in co-operation with the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies and by the Theological School of Thessaloniki University; in Athens, by the Church of Greece in co-operation with the Theological School of Athens University and by the Academy of Sciences in Athens; in Toronto, Canada, and in Regensburg, Germany, by their own universities in co-operation with the Churches there. One particular result of these events has been a revival in studies concerning Basil the Great.

The Holy Synod of the Church of Greece formed a Celebration Committee under the leadership of His beatitude the Archbishop of Athens, Mgr Serapheim; the committee was composed of bishops of the Church of Greece and professors of the Theological Schools of Athens and Thessaloniki. The Symposium opened ceremoniously in the Great lecture-hall of Athens University, and the lectures took place in the Pendeli Orthodox Centre on the 15th and 16th October.

The Pendeli convention took on an inter-Orthodox character as it was attended by representatives of almost all the Orthodox Churches and Theological Schools. The following 21 lectures were given, according to the official programme of the convention: 1) "A general view of Basil the Great's theological orientation and contribution", by St. Papadopoulos (University of Athens), 2) "Basil the Great as the opposer of false doctrine", by Michail Nazm (Patriarchate of Antioch), 3) "The knowledge of God according to Basil the Great", by Vasileios, Archbishop of Brussels (Patriarchate of Moscow), 4) "Faith and Baptism: two means of salvation according to St Basil", by Athanasios Jevtich (Theological School of Belgrade), 5) "Social ideas in the works of Basil the Great", by Anthony, Bishop of Ploesti (Roumanian Patriarchate), 6) "The Holy Scripture in the works of Basil the Great", by G. Galitis (University of Thessaloniki), 7) "Relations between Basil the Great and Athanasius the Great", by K. Kallinikos (Theological School of Halki of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), 8) "The social concepts of Basil the Great", by Ioannis, Bishop of Dragovistia (Theological Academy of Sophia), 9) "The letters of Basil the Great to Eusebios of Samosat", by Andreas Papavasileiou (University of Athens), 10) "Basil the Great and hymnological and euchological tradition", by Dionysios, Metropolitan of Serbia and Kozani (Church of Greece), 11) "Devout account of the personality of Basil the Great", by K. Bonis (Academy and University of Athens), 12) "The Virtues in Man's spiritual life, according to the works of Basil the Great", by Eimovich Skurat (Theological Academy of Moscow), 13) "Dialogue with other denominations, according to Basil the Great", by Ev. Theodorou (University of Athens), 14) "The Second Ecumenical Synod: triumph of the ecclesiastical policy of Basil

the Great”, by Ger. Konidaris (University of Athens), 15) “Basil the Great: the contribution of Roumanian Orthodox theologians to the interpretation of his ideas”, by Viorel Ionitsa (Theological Institute of Bucharest), 16) “The unity of the Church according to Basil the Great”, by Ilia Zonevski (Theological Academy of Sofia), 17) “Chronological chart of the life of Basil the Great”, by St. Papadopoulos (University of Athens), 18) “Who was the original author of the Philokalia and when and by whom Basil was named Great”, by St. Papadopoulos (University of Athens), 19) “Introduction to the liturgical theology of Basil the Great”, by G. Bebis (Theological School of the Holy Cross, Boston), 20) “Basil the Great in the consciousness of the Greek Race today”, by Ath. Angelopoulos (University of Thessaloniki), 21) “Basil the Great as pedagogue”, by Ilias Moutsoulas (University of Athens).

The papers listed above and the discussions which followed them concerned the theology, sociology and biography of Basil the Great and also his influence upon the consciousness of the Greek Race today. Particularly interesting conclusions were drawn as follows: 1) Concerning Basil the Great’s theological ideas, it was emphasised that his great contribution to the formulation of Orthodox dogma in the IVth century was the proper distinction between the “hypostasis” and “nature” of the Deity; 2) Basil the Great’s sociological ideas were directed not at the overthrow of the social establishment but at the restoration and transmutation of Mankind; 3) Concerning the chronological problems connected with the life of Basil the Great, amongst others two theories were maintained as to the date of his death, (a) that he died one or two days before January 1st 379, ie. during the last two days of 378 A.D., and (b) that he died at the beginning of November 378 A.D. Most of the facts we know about Basil the Great’s life uphold the former postulation; 4) Concerning Basil the Great’s influence upon the consciousness of the Greek Race today, it was demonstrated by means of a series of statistics and facts that the religious life, demographic, topographical and onomatological facts, culture, ethnology and art of the Greek Race, both in Greece and wherever else they may live on earth, are imbued by the continuing presence and memory of Basil the Great, more than any other great Father of the Church either of his time or since; 5) Other opinions and suggestions voiced by various speakers and debaters resulted in the following conclusions: that Basil the Great’s contribution to Orthodox monasticism had not been mentioned; that Greek theological thinking is still at the first stage of studying Basil the Great’s work—with the exception, of course, of his biography, for in Professor Christos’ most recent study of the life and work of Basil the Great we have the most representative biography hitherto of this great man; that the complete works of Basil the Great should be published by the “Apostoliki Diaconia” of Greece or by some other affiliated foundation; that a complete bibliography on Basil the Great should be published (a task which has already been embarked upon, following a similar suggestion made at the Toronto Convention); that, especially in view of the contemporary orientation of the young, Basil the Great’s work, “To the Young, so that they may benefit from the Greek literature” should be published in simple Modern Greek; and finally that this 1600th anniversary of the death of Basil the Great should become the occasion for organising symposia for research into other aspects of Basil the Great’s work.

On the evening of October 16th immediately after the above conclusions had been reached, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Mgr Serapheim, invited the members of the Convention to a meal with the Minister of National Education and Religions Mr I. Varvitsiotis. Having made a brief and epigrammatic speech, His Beatitude presented commemorative medallions bearing the face of Basil the Great to the present Minister, to the Con-

vention's speakers, to the representatives of the Orthodox Churches and to the attendant bishops and professors from the Theological Faculties of Greece and of other countries.

University of Thessaloniki

ATH. ANGELOPOULOS