

St. Macrina the Elder

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c. 270–340 • Neocaesarea (modern-day Turkey)

Macrina was born, raised, and married in Neocaesarea. Both she and her husband were pagans and did not know about the Good News of Jesus's love. Then one day a man named Gregory arrived. He was the new Christian bishop of Neocaesarea, and Macrina and her husband became his friends. Gregory taught Macrina and her husband about Jesus, and they decided to be baptized Christian. Macrina and her husband had a son named Basil, and they raised him to be strong in his new Faith.

At that time, the Roman emperors persecuted the Christians because they would not worship the emperor as a god. Macrina and her family had to flee terrible persecution under the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian. They escaped from the city to the woods and scrounged and struggled to live in the wild for seven years. They would not have been able to survive if God had not taken care of them. During that time, Macrina's husband died. Some people say that he was martyred, which means that he died for his faith in Jesus.

Finally, the persecutions died down. Macrina and her son returned to Neocaesarea. But now they were poor, and Macrina had to raise her son all by herself. Macrina and Basil begged on the streets for food, and Macrina would tell stories for coins. The city people made fun of her because she was a Christian. Still, her love for Jesus never weakened, and this love was also strong in Basil.

Even though he was poor, Basil became a lawyer and a teacher. He married a holy woman named Emmelia, and Macrina lived with them. Basil and Emmelia had nine children and raised them in the Christian Faith. They were especially kind to the poor, remembering their time living in poverty. Macrina read the Bible to her grandchildren and passed on to them the strength of her faith. She died a holy death surrounded by the love of her family. Her son, Basil, and his wife, Emmelia, and four of her grandchildren—Macrina the Younger, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Peter of Sebaste—all became saints.

St. Macrina, bless my mother and grandmothers!