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St. Basil was a venerable bishop and a solemn doctor, of whom Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium wrote the life.

REVELATIONS OF BASIL'S HOLINESS

And it was showed in a vision to an hermit named Effrem how much holy he was. On a time as the said Effrem was in a trance he saw a pillar of fire, whose head reached heaven and a voice thereupon saying: Such is Basil, like unto this pillar that thou seest.

And after this the hermit came to the city for to see at the day of Epiphany so noble a man, and when he saw him, he was clad with a white vesture going honourably with the clergy, then the hermit said to himself; I see well that I have laboured in vain, and for nought, he that is set in such honour may not be such as I have seen, we that have borne the burden and labour of the heat of the day in great pain, we had never such thing, and he here which is set in such honour, and also thus accompanied, is a column of fire, now I have great marvel what this may be.

And St. Basil that saw this in spirit, made him to be brought to him, and when he was come he saw a tongue of fire speaking in his mouth. Then said Effrem: Truly Basil is great, truly Basil is the pillar of fire, and verily the Holy Ghost speaketh in his mouth.

And Effrem said to St. Basil: Sire, I pray thee that thou impetrate [beseech] of God that I may speak Greek.

To whom St. Basil said: Thou hast demanded a hard thing, nevertheless he prayed for him, and he spake Greek.

Another hermit saw St. Basil, how he went in the habit of a bishop and deemed evilly in his thought, how he delighted in this estate in vain glory, and anon there came a voice that said to him: Thou delightest thee more in playing with and handling thy cat, than Basil doth in all his array and adornments.

BASIL CHALLENGES THE EMPEROR VALENS, PATRON OF THE ARIAN HERETICS

Valens the emperor which sustained the Arian heretics, took away a church from the Christian men, and gave it to the Arians, to whom St. Basil said: O thou emperor, it is

Basil is said of basis in Greek, which is as much to say as a foundement, and leos, that is people, for he was foundement of them that would go to their maker. Or else it is said of basilico a serpent, for he overcame the serpent, enemy of mankind.

written: *Honor regis judicium diligit*, “The honour of the king requireth true judgment, and the doom of a king is justice.” And wherefore then hast thou commanded that the catholic Christian men be put out of holy church?

And the emperor said to him: Yet returnest thou to say villainy to me? it appertaineth not [is not proper] to thee. To whom St. Basil said: It appertaineth well to me, and also to die for justice.

Then Demosthenes, provost of the meats [foods] of the emperor, upholder of the Arians, spake for them, and made an answer corrupted in language for to make satisfaction. And St. Basil said to him: It appertaineth to thee to ordain for the meats of the emperor and not to enquire of the teachings divine.

The which, as confused, held him still, and said not. And the emperor said to St. Basil: Now go thou forth and judge thou between them, and not for favour ne over great love that thou hast to that one party, ne for hate that thou hast to that other.

Then St. Basil went to them and said tofore the Arians and to the Catholics that the doors of the church should be shut fast, and sealed with the seals of either party, and that every one should pray to God for his right, and that the church should be delivered to them at whose prayer it should open. And thus they accorded. The Arians put them to prayer three days and three nights, and when they came to the doors they opened not. Then St. Basil ordained a procession, and came to the church, and knocked a stroke with his crook, saying: *Attollite portas principes vestras, etc.*, and anon as he had said the verse the doors opened, and they entered in and gave laud and praisings to God, and so was their church rendered to them again.

And after, the emperor did promise to St. Basil much good and honour if he would consent to him. And St. Basil said that was a demand to make to children, for they that be fulfilled with divine words will not suffer that one only syllable of the divine science be corrupted. Then the emperor had great indignation of him, and took a pen for to write the sentence on him that he should be exiled, and the first pen brake, and the second, and also the third, and his hand began to tremble for fear; then in great indignation he all to-rent the schedule [paper].

THE YOUNG MAN WHO SOLD HIS SOUL FOR A WOMAN

There was an honest worshipful man named Heradius which had but one daughter, whom he disposed to consecrate to God, but the fiend, enemy to mankind, inflamed and made one of the servants of the same to burn in the love of this maid. And when he remembered that he was but a servant, him thought it not possible, that ever he should attain to come to his desire of so noble a virgin. He went to an enchanter to whom he promised great quantity of money if he would help him, to whom the enchanter answered that he could not do it; But I shall send thee to the devil which is my master and lord, and if thou do that he shall say to thee, thou shalt have thy desire.

And the young man said he would so do. And this enchanter sent a letter by him to the devil, this containing: My lord and master, because that I must hastily and busily draw all them that I may from the religion of christendom, and bring them to thy will, to the end that thy party alway grow and multiply, I send to thee this young man, esprised in the love of the maid, and demandeth that his desires may be accomplished, that herein I have glory and honour, and that from now forthon I may gather to thee and draw more.

Then he gave him his letter, and bad him go, and at midnight stand upon the tomb of a paynim, and call the devil, and hold up this letter in the air, and anon he shall come to thee.

And he anon went forth and did as he was bidden, and held the letter in the air, and forthwith came the prince of darkness fellowshipped with a great multitude of fiends, and when he had read the schedule he said to the young man: Wilt thou believe in me if I accomplish thy desire?

And he answered that he would so do. Then the devil said to him: Reny then Jesu Christ.

Which said: I reny him.

And the devil said to him: Ye Christian men, ye be all false and untrue, for when ye have to do ye come to me, and when ye have that ye demand, anon after ye reny me, and return to your Jesu Christ, and he receiveth you because he is right debonair [gracious]; but if thou wilt that I do thy will, make a bond of thine own handwriting and deliver it to me, and let it contain that thou hast forsaken Jesu Christ, thy baptism, and the profession of Christian religion, and that thou be my servant and with me at the judgment to be damned.

And anon all this he wrote and took it to the devil, and put him in his servitude; and anon the devil took with him fiends that served for fornication, and commanded them that they should go and inflame the heart of that maid in the love of that young man. The which came to her and so inflamed her in the love of that young man that she fell down to the ground tofore her father crying piteously and saying: Father have pity on me, for cruelly I am tormented for the love of your servant; have mercy on me, and show to me your fatherly love that ye owe to me, that ye give to me in marriage the young man that I desire, and if ye do not, ye shall see anon that I shall die, and thereof shall ye answer at the day of doom.

And the father weeping said: Alas! wretched that I am; what is to me befallen, God have mercy on my daughter that thus taketh away my treasure and quencheth the light of mine eyes, I would have given thee to the spouse of heaven, and weened to have saved thee, and thou art demesured in worldly love and fleshly. Abide daughter and tarry that I may marry thee to him that I had purposed, and bring not me my last days in sorrow.

And she cried and said: Father, do as I have said, or anon thou shalt see me dead. And so as she wept bitterly as out of her wit, the father in great desolation of heart moved by the counsel of his friends, and deceived, did her pleasure and married her to the young man and gave to her all his substance, saying: Go forth my daughter, very caitiff that thou art.

And forth she went and took him to her husband and they dwelled together. The husband went not to church, ne he blessed him not, ne recommended him not to God, whereof many of the neighbours noted it, and said to the wife: This young man that thou hast taken is not christened, ne he goeth not to the church. And when she heard that she was much abashed, and for sorrow fell down to the ground, and with her nails began to scratch her face, and beat her breast and said: Alas! most miserable wretch that I am, whereto was I born? I would I had perished in my birth.

And then she told her husband what she had heard of him. and he answered that it was nothing so; then said she: If thou wilt that I believe thee, thou and I shall to-morn go to church, and then shall I know if it be true that thou sayest. Then he yielded him, confused, and saw well that he might not deny but it was so, and told to her all that he had done.

And when she had heard all the case how he had done, she began to wail and to weep strongly, and forthwith went to St. Basil and rehearsed to him all that she had heard of her husband. And St. Basil sent for the husband and said to him: My son, wilt thou return again to God?

Sire, said he, yea, but I may not, for I have bound myself to the devil, and renied Jesu Christ, and thereof I have made a writing of my hand and delivered it to him.

And St. Basil said to him: Thereof no force; our Lord is debonair and merciful, and shall receive thee if thou repentest thee.

And anon took the young man and made the sign of the cross on his forehead, and shut him in a chamber three days. After, he went to see him, and demanded saying: My son, how is it with thee? And he answered: Sire, I am in great pain, and in great anguish, in such ways that I may not bear the clamours, the terrors, and the lapidiments [stonings] that the fiends do to me, for they hold in their hands my writing in accusing me, and saying I came to them and not they to me.

Then said Basil: My son, be not afeard, but put firmly thy belief in Jesu Christ.

And St. Basil gave to him a little meat [food] for to comfort him and marked him with the sign of the cross, and closed him again, and he went and prayed for him. After certain days passed, he went and visited him again, and asked how it was with him, and he answered much better than tofore: I hear their clamours and their menaces, but I see them not.

St. Basil gave him meat and closed the door and blessed him, and went and prayed God for him, and forty days after he returned and said to him: My son, how is it with thee? He answered: Holy father, it is well with me this day for I have seen thee fight for me, and overcome the devil. Then he took him out, and called all the clergy, the religiouses [i.e. members of religious orders], and the people, and warned [advised] them that they should pray all for him, and led the young man by the hand to the church.

And anon the devil with a great multitude of fiends, without seeing of any man, took the young man and pained them to take him out of the hand of St. Basil. And the young man began to cry: "Holy saint of God, help me." And the fiends enforced them so greatly that they made St. Basil to move in holding the young man.

St. Basil said: Thou cursed and cruel fiend, sufficeth not to thee enough thy perdition proper, but thou must tempt the creatures of my God for to have them lost?

The devil then said, hearing many, O Basil, thou grievest and annoyest me much.

Then all the people cried, *Kyrie eleison* [Lord, have mercy!], and St. Basil said to the devil: Our Lord God blame and reprove thee, cursed fiend.

And the devil said to him, Basil, thou grieves and annoyest me much; I went not to him, but he came to me, he hath renied his God and hath confessed me to be his lord, lo! here in my hand the writing that he gave to me.

And St. Basil said to him: We shall not cease to pray for him unto the time that thou shalt deliver his writing.

And thus as St. Basil prayed holding the hand of the young man, the schedule which he had made was brought in the air in the sight of all, and was laid in the hand of St. Basil, the which received it and said to the child; Brother, knowest thou these letters?

And he answered him: I know them well, for they were written with my hand. Then St. Basil brake them, and led the child to the church, and so ordained and disposed him, that he was worthy to receive the holy sacrament and after, he being enseigned and taught, delivered to him a rule how he should keep him, and delivered him to his wife.

THE WOMAN WHO WROTE DOWN ALL HER SINS

Also there was a woman that had committed many sins, the which she all wrote, and at the end there was one more grievous than the other, which in the writing she delivered to St. Basil, praying him to pray for her, and that by his prayers her sins might be forgiven. And then he prayed for her, and the woman opened the bill, wherein she found all the sins defaced and put out except the grievous sin. And she came to St. Basil and said: Thou holy saint of God, have mercy on me, and get me forgiveness for this, like as thou hast done for the other.

And St. Basil said to the woman: Leave and go from me, woman, for I am a man, sinful as thou art, which have need of pardon as much as thou.

And as that she was busy and grievous to him, he said to her: Go unto the holy man that is named Effrem, and demand of him that he may get pardon for thee.

And when she came to the holy man Effrem, and had told to him wherefore she was sent to him from St. Basil, he said to her: Go from me, for I am a sinful man, but go again to St. Basil,

and it is he that may get thee forgiveness for this sin like as he did for the other; and haste thee to the end that thou mayst find him alive.

And when she came into the city, St. Basil was borne to the church for to be buried, and she began to cry, saying: God be judge between me and thee, for thou mayst well appease God for me, and thou hast sent me to another, and anon she threw the bill upon the covering of the bier.

And anon after she took it again, and opened it, and found it all plain, and out clean of the bill, and then with others she gave thankings to God.

ST. BASIL CONVERTS A JEW

Tofore or St. Basil died, he being in the malady that he died, he did do come a Jew to him which was much expert in physic [medical science], and he loved him because he saw that he should be converted to the faith. And when he was come, he felt his pulse, and saw that he was nigh his end, and said to his meiny [retinue]: Make ye ready such thing as behoveth for his sepulture [burial], for he shall die anon.

Which word St. Basil heard and said to him: Thou wottest not what thou sayest.

And the Jew, named Joseph, said to him: This day shalt thou die when the sun shall go down in the west.

To whom St. Basil said: What shalt thou say if I die not this day?

To whom Joseph said: Sire, it is not otherwise possible.

Then said St. Basil: if I live unto the morrow noon what shalt thou do?

And Joseph said: If thou live until the morrow that hour I shall die.

And St. Basil said: thou sayst truth, thou shalt die, that is, sin shall die in thee to the end that thou shalt live in Jesu Christ.

And Joseph said: I wot well what thou sayest, and if thou live unto that time I shall do that thou sayest. Then St. Basil said, how well that by nature he should have died anon forthwith, yet he gat and impetred of God space that he should not then die, and lived unto the morn at noon, which thing seeing, Joseph marvelled much and believed in Jesu Christ.

St. Basil then took heart. and overcame the feebleness of the body, and arose out of his bed, and went to the church, and with his proper hands baptized the Jew, and after returned to his bed, and anon gave up his spirit, and rendered his soul unto God about the year of our Lord three hundred and seventy.

Then let us pray to him that he get us grace of our Lord Jesu Christ, that he will forgive us all our sins.

The [iconography of St. Basil](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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