

Macrina (340–379)

Macrina was a monastic, theologian and teacher. She founded one of the earliest Christian communities in the Cappadocian city of Pontus. Macrina left no writings; we know of her through the works of her brother St. Gregory of Nyssa (page 266). In his *Life of St. Macrina*, Gregory describes her as both beautiful and brilliant, an authoritative spiritual teacher.

Macrina persuaded her mother Emmelia to renounce their wealthy lifestyle and to help her establish a monastery on the family's estate. Macrina's ideal of community emphasized caring for the poor and ministering to the wider community. She literally picked up young women who lay in the road starving. Many joined her order.

Gregory credits Macrina as the spiritual and theological intelligence behind her siblings' notable careers in the Church. Gregory, and their brothers St. Basil (page 426), St. Peter of Sebaste, and Naucratis went to her often for theological

counsel. Macrina frequently challenged her celebrated brothers. She told Gregory his fame was not due to his own merit, but to the prayers of his parents. She took Basil in hand when he returned from Athens "monstrously conceited about his skill in rhetoric." Under her influence, Basil and Peter renounced material possessions and turned away from secular academia to become monks and theologians. Basil and Peter wrote a Rule for community life, ensuring that Macrina's ideas for Christian community would have lasting authority. Basil, Gregory and Peter all became bishops, in no small measure because of Macrina's influence, and became leading defenders of the Nicene faith.

Gregory visited Macrina as she lay dying on two planks on the floor. He relates Macrina's last words as a classical Greek farewell oration imbued with Holy Scripture. In both his *Life of St. Macrina* and in his later treatise of *The Soul and Resurrection*, Gregory presents Macrina admiringly as a Christian Socrates, delivering beautiful deathbed prayers and teachings about the resurrection.

Leader: Peace on each one who comes in need,
All: ***Peace on each one who comes in joy.***

Leader: Peace on each one who offers prayers,
All: ***Peace on each one who offers song.***

Leader: Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,
All: ***Peace of the Spirit, the triune one.***

Psalm 119: 97-104

Give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

97 Lord, how I love your law! •
All the day long it is my study.

98 Your commandments have made me wiser than my
enemies, •
for they are ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, •
for your testimonies are my meditation.

100 I am wiser than the aged, •
because I keep your commandments.

Give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

101 I restrain my feet from every evil way, •
that I may keep your word.

102 I have not turned aside from your judgments, •
for you have been my teacher.

103 How sweet are your words on my tongue! •
They are sweeter than honey to my mouth.

104 Through your commandments I get understanding; •
therefore I hate all lying ways.

Give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

Prayer

Leader: O God, for your love for us, warm and brooding, which has brought us to birth and opened our eyes to the wonder and beauty of creation,

All: ***We give you thanks.***

Leader: For your love for us, wild and freeing, which has awakened us to the energy of creation: to the sap that flows, the blood that pulses, the heart that sings,

All: ***We give you thanks.***

Leader: For your love for us, compassionate and patient, which has carried us through our pain, wept beside us in our sin, and waited with us in our confusion,

All: ***We give you thanks.***

Leader: For your love for us, strong and challenging, which has called us to risk for you, asked for the best in us, and shown us how to serve,

All: ***We give you thanks.***

Leader: O God we come to celebrate that your Holy Spirit is present deep within us, and at the heart of all life. Forgive us when we forget your gift of love made known to us in Jesus, and draw us into your presence.

Philippians 3:7–11

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Sharing of the day

Prayer

Leader: We bring to God someone whom we have met or remembered today and for whom we want to pray
_____ Holy One, ***We ask your blessing.***

Leader: We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer _____
Holy One, ***We ask your blessing.***

Leader: We bring to God a troubled situation in our world tonight _____
Holy One, ***We ask your blessing.***

Leader: We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to like or forgive or trust
Holy One, ***We ask your blessing.***

Leader: We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit,
clarity of mind, and warmth of affection.
Holy One, ***We ask your blessing.***

Hymn 296

1 We know that Christ is raised and dies no more.
Embraced by death he broke its fearful hold;
and our despair he turned to blazing joy.
Alleluia!

2 We share by water in his saving death.
Reborn, we share with him an Easter life
as living members of a living Christ.
Alleluia!

3 The Father's splendor clothes the Son with life.
The Spirit's power shakes the church of God.
Baptized we live with God the living Christ.
Alleluia!

4 A new creation comes to life and grows
as Christ's new body takes on flesh and blood.
The universe restored and whole will sing:
Alleluia!

Closing responses

Leader: O Trinity of Love, You have been with us at the world's beginning,

All: ***Be with us till the world's end.***

Leader: You have been with us at our life's shaping,

All: ***Be with us at our life's end.***

Leader: You have been with us at the sun's rising

All: ***Be with us till the day's end. Amen.***

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master.

***grant that we may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.***

***For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are
pardoned,
it is in dying that we are born again
to everlasting life. Amen.***

Leader: And now may the God of hope bring you such joy and peace in believing that you overflow with hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.

All: ***Amen.***



