

## Jan. 14, St. Macrina the Elder

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Jan. 14, 2010 NCR Today

Today is the feast of [St. Macrina the Elder](#). [1]

This holy woman was the grandmother of two Fathers of the Church and of their sister, Macrina the Younger, "the true founder of what is sometimes called 'Basilian' monasticism".

"The family of Macrina the Elder is a good place to start our study of women's spiritual direction in the age of the church fathers, for it is unique in Christian history for its renowned holiness. Macrina the Elder's grandsons Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, both church fathers, are perhaps the most well known, but they are not the sole reason why posterity has long revered the family; the reason is that the family nourished three generations of saints.

Macrina the Elder, her daughter Emmelia, and Emmelia's children Macrina the Younger, Peter, Basil, and Gregory are all honored as saints. What is pertinent to us here is the fact that **the family recognized the women to be the guides directing them all to their spiritual ends.** 'What clearer proof of our faith could there be than that we were brought up by our grandmother, a blessed woman,' wrote Basil. 'I am speaking of the illustrious Macrina, by whom we were taught the words of the most blessed Gregory [Thaumaturgus], which, having preserved until her time by uninterrupted tradition, she also guarded, and she formed and molded me, still a child, to the doctrines of piety.'"

--from [A Woman's Way: The Forgotten History of Women Spiritual Directors](#), [2] by Patricia Ranft, published by Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09508b.htm>

[2] <http://tiny.cc/fSrgs>