January 2nd: Memorial of Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

Gospel text (*Mt* 23:8-12): Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, “As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

“Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah.”

Fr. Josep VALL i Mundó
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we celebrate the memory of the St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen, both bishops and doctors of the Church in the 4th century. They were close friends, living a fraternal friendship until death: they shared the eremitical life and cultivated the philosophy and theology in the years of the Christological disputes.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, recounting the origins of mutual friendship, writes: "I kept my great Basil’s company, not only by reverence, but also because I realized the strength of his character and the opportunity of his words… This was the beginning of our friendship; from this sprang the spark of our communion: we were one thing and watched over the same things. The hope that leads us was one.”

What was it that they watched over? What was the hope that kept them always united? The answer is Jesus Christ, as it is the Master and the Guide: “As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher… Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah” (Mt 23:8-10). In the name of Christ will they find their union: "our big name consisted of the fact that we were Christian, and so we were called” (Saint Gregory).

Some "prophets of the thinking" of the 19th century claimed that the progress of science and technique would "automatically" lead to the peace in the world. Recent history has not proven them right: "knowing" without the knowledge of God is partial; it hardly knows love and easily leads to separation. Peace and fraternity are not children of science or technique, but a gift of love from our God and Father. And, in fact, it was in the name of Christ that Basil and Gregory - men of science and thought - came to be brothers. "You are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven" (Mt 23: 8-9).