



All About Saint Vasilios and the Greek Vasilopita Tradition:

Who is Saint Vasilios?

Saint Basil the Great (known as Saint Vasilios in Greek) was born in Caesarea, Cappadocia in the year 329. He came from a holy family, many of his relatives are also saints. Saint Basil went to school in Constantinople. There, he studied hard and became good friends with a fellow Cappadocian who later became known as Saint Gregory the Theologian. Saint Basil decided to leave his worldly cares and join the ascetic life. He visited many monks and wrote many homilies. He was one of the greatest writers and speakers of the Christian church. He also wrote the prayers of the Divine Liturgy that we use during Lent. The Saint eventually became the Bishop of Caesarea and was a great defender against the heresy of Arianism. Saint Basil loved children and always assisted the sick. He founded many hospitals, orphanages, and old age homes. Just like Saint Nicholas, he would sometimes throw gold coins in the windows of poor girls who needed dowries to get married.

Where did the Vasilopita tradition come from?

Sometime when Saint Basil wanted to give money to the poor, he would have the bakers secretly put gold coins into loaves of bread. He did this because some people were too ashamed or proud to take the money openly.

Also, since the Arians were so opposed to Saint Basil's true Orthodox teachings, the emperor threatened to kill Saint Basil and take all the earthly belongings of his people. Saint Basil persuaded his people to offer up their jewelry and, on New Year's Eve, presented them to the emperor as a gift. Saint Basil also said the following quote:

"Fire, death by the sword and the beasts that tear our flesh with their long nails, give us joy rather than fear. You may insult; you may threaten; you may do whatever you like to enjoy your power, but let the Emperor know that even his worst threats will not persuade us to compromise with impiety."

The emperor was so moved by the quote that he decided to leave Saint Basil alone and would not even accept the jewelry gifts. Saint Basil returned the jewelry to his people by baking them into a large cake. Miraculously, when Saint Basil cut the cake, each person got the exact piece of jewelry that they had contributed.

Vasilopita Cake Recipe:

4 C Flour
2 T Baking Powder
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ C Sugar
1 C Soft Butter
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C Orange Juice
1 t Vanilla
3 Eggs
Powdered Sugar

Use a mixer to blend the butter and sugar together. Add the orange juice and the vanilla and mix some more. Add the eggs and mix for 2 minutes.

Combine the flour with the baking powder and add those into the other ingredients. Mix on low for 2 more minutes.

Add the coin into the mixed batter (you can wrap the coin in foil).

Pour the batter into a greased 10in round pan. Bake at 350 F for about 50 minutes.

When it is cooled, dust with powdered sugar.

When serving, cut the cake so that everyone gets a piece. The person who gets the coin in their piece is said to have a year full of blessings!