



**The Orthodox Parish
of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
Lancaster, UK.**

The Stavronian

a monthly magazine & newsletter publicised by the 'Holy Cross Synodia'



*Ἰσθρονος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης,
(Φ. Κόντογλου, 1962).*

*The Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
belongs to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland.
The Patriarchate of Antioch is third senior of the Orthodox Churches.
The Patriarch is His Beatitude John X.*

*The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch
(Acts 11:26)*

JOHN THE BLESSED

The Nativity Feast having passed, St. Basil took his staff and traversed all of the towns, in order to see who would celebrate his Feast Day with purity of heart. He passed through regions of every sort and through villages of prominence, yet regardless of where he knocked, no door opened to him, since they took him for a beggar.

On the eve of the New Year, he came upon a certain hamlet, which was the poorest of the poor villages in all of Greece. There, he beheld in front of him a small knoll, below which there was secreted away a sheepfold. St. Basil went into the pen and, knocking on the door of the hut with his staff, called out: "Have mercy on me, a poor man, for the sake of your deceased relatives, for even Christ lived as a beggar on this earth." Awakening, the dogs lunged at him.

But as they drew near him and sniffed him, they became gentle, wagged their tails, and lay down at his feet, whimpering imploringly and with joy. Thereupon, a shepherd, a young man of twenty-five or so, with a curly black beard, opened the door and stepped out: John Barbákos—a demure and rugged man, a sheepman. Before taking a good look at who was knocking, he had already said, "Enter, come inside. Good day, Happy New Year!"

John's flock was sparse and he was poor; yet, he was blessed. Anyone who happened to pass by their hut they cared for as though he were a brother. And it is thus that St. Basil found lodging in their home. On that night, he was awaited, in all of the cities and villages of the known world, by rulers, Hierarchs, and officials; but he went to none of these. Instead, he went to lodge in the hut of John the Blessed.

"Elder, I am greatly joyful. I wish to have you read to us the writings, (i.e. the hymns), about St. Basil. I am an illiterate man, but I like all the writings of our religion (i.e. Church). In fact, I have a small book from a Hagiorite Abbot, i.e. from Mt Athos, and whenever someone who can read and write happens to pass by, I get them to read out of the booklet, since we have no Church near us."

In the East, it was dimly dawning. St Basil rose and stood, facing eastward, making his Cross. "*Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.*" John the Blessed went and stood behind him, and his wife, having nursed their baby, also went to stand near him, with her arms crossed (over her chest). St. Basil said the whole of Matins and the entire Liturgy, and blessed the household. As they sat at the table, having eaten and finished their food, the wife brought the Vasilopita (a sweet bread or cake baked in honour of St. Basil on New Year's day) and placed it on the serving table. Then St. Basil took a knife and with it traced the sign of the Cross on the Vasilopita, saying, "*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" He cut a first piece, saying, "*for Christ,*" a second, afterwards, saying, "*for the Theotokos,*" and then "*for the master of the house, John the blessed.*" John exclaimed, "*Elder, you forgot St. Basil!*" The Saint replied, "*Yes, indeed,*" and thus said, "*And for the servant of God, Basil.*" After this, he resumed: "*...and for the master of the house,*" "*for the mistress of the house,*" "*for the child,*" "*for the farmhand,*" "*for the animals,*" and "*for the poor.*" Thereupon, John the Blessed said, "*Elder, why did you not cut a piece for your reverendship?*" And the Saint said, "*But I did, O blessed one!*" But John, the Blessed one, did not understand.

Then John the Blessed said: "*I wonder if you can tell me, Elder, since you*

know many things, to what palaces did St. Basil go this evening? And the rulers and the monarchs—what sins do they have? We poor people are the sinners, since our poverty leads us into sin.” “O Lord my God,” said St. Basil with tears, “I have seen that Thy servant John the simple is worthy and that it is meet that Thou shouldest enter into his shelter. He is a babe, and it is to babes that Thy Mysteries are revealed.” And again John the Blessed, understood nothing...

Photios Kontoglou

Translated by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and adapted by Kleio Kechagia.

Source: [Blog by John Sanidopoulos](#)



THE TRADITION OF THE VASILOPITA (WITH RECIPE)

The tradition of baking and cutting a special "pita" (which can mean a loaf of bread, a cake, or even a pie) each year on January 1st is observed in honour of our holy father Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappodocia - hence its name "Vasilopita" meaning "St. Basil's pie." This tradition is observed in both parish

churches and in the homes of the faithful. What is the meaning of this tradition and how did it begin?

For centuries upon centuries, parents, grandparents and godparents have related the following to Orthodox children about St. Basil and the Vasilopita. One year, during a time of terrible famine, the emperor levied a sinfully excessive tax upon the people of Caesarea. The tax was such a heavy burden upon the already impoverished people that to avoid debtors' prison each family had to relinquish its few remaining coins and pieces of jewellery, including precious family heirlooms. Learning of this injustice upon his flock, St. Basil the Great, the archbishop of Caesarea, took up his bishop's staff and the book of the holy Gospels and came to his people's defence by fearlessly calling the emperor to repentance. By God's grace, the emperor did repent! He cancelled the tax and instructed his tax collectors to turn over to St. Basil all of the chests containing the coins and jewellery which had been paid as taxes by the people of Caesarea. But now St. Basil was faced with the daunting and impossible task of returning these thousands of coins and pieces of jewellery to their rightful owners. After praying for a long time before the icons of our Master Christ and His All-Holy Mother, St. Basil had all the treasures baked into one huge pita. He then called all the townspeople to prayer at the cathedral, and, after Divine Liturgy, he blessed and cut the pita, giving a piece to each person. Miraculously, each owner received in his piece of Vasilopita his own valuables. They all joyfully returned home, giving thanks to God who had delivered them from abject poverty and to their good and holy bishop St. Basil the Great! In remembrance of that miracle wrought by God as a result of St. Basil's love and defence of his people, Orthodox Christians have observed the tradition of the

Vasilopita each year on January 1st - the date on which St. Basil reposed in the Lord in the year 379.

In some places the Vasilopita is prepared as a loaf of rich bread (like that used for Artoklasia), while in other places it takes the form of a spicy sheet cake (without frosting). But no matter what form a Vasilopita may take, they all have one thing in common - each contains a single coin. After placing the bread dough or cake batter in the proper baking pan, the baker makes with the foil-wrapped coin the sign of the Cross over it, closes his/her eyes, and then secretly places it into the unbaked Vasilopita. After the Vasilopita is baked and cooled, it is blessed and cut following Divine Liturgy for the feast of St. Basil on January 1st.

A Simple Recipe for Vasilopita

Ingredients

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 extra-large eggs
- Grated rind of 2 large oranges
- Grated rind of 2 large lemons
- ½ teaspoon crushed/powdered sour cherry pits (mahleb)
- 2 teaspoons crushed/powdered gum mastic
- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup milk
- 1 egg yolk blended with 1 tablespoon milk
- sesame seeds
- blanched almonds
- a 20p coin wrapped in aluminum foil

Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Thickly butter a 10-inch round spring form pan.

2. In a large bowl of an electric mixer, cream the butter until it is light and fluffy. Beat in the sugar and beat until the mixture is light. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the orange and lemon rinds, and the crushed/powdered sour cherry pits and gum mastic.

3. In a separate bowl, sift together three cups of the flour, the baking powder and salt.

4. With the mixer on low speed, gradually beat in the dry mixture alternately with the milk. The batter will be very thick. Using a wooden spoon, gradually blend in the remaining flour, beating well until completely smooth.

5. Spread the batter into the pan, press the coin into the dough until it is completely covered (don't let anyone see where you place it!), and then smooth the top. Brush the top evenly with the egg and milk mixture and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Gently press the blanched almonds into the top to make a Cross and spell out the date of the new year.

6. Bake for 45 min, until golden brown (if it browns too quickly, cover the top with aluminium foil). Cool in the pan for 15 min before removing from spring form and thoroughly cool before slicing.

Source: [The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America](http://www.antiiochianorthodoxchristianarchdioceseofnorthamerica.com)



THOUGHTS FROM THE CELTIC FATHERS

From the life of Saint Kevin of Glendalough, Ireland: It is said that a hunting party was chasing a boar with their hounds. The boar came upon Saint Kevin in prayer beneath a tree and laid down at his feet. The hounds, when they saw the boar at Kevin's feet, also lay down near the saint, not daring to approach the boar while it was under Kevin's protection. The men decided to ignore these signs and to go ahead and slay the boar. However, a flock of birds came on the Saint, and the hunters taking this as a sign, changed their mind and left the boar with Kevin.

Free translation from the book "[Orthodox British and Celtic Church - The Life of the Saints of Wales](#)" by Kassiani Mazaraki (in Greek).

*Christos Vasilopoulos
Kozani, Greece*

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE RE- MEMBERED THIS MONTH

Jan. 6: *Fr. Michael Harper*

Jan. 14: *Nina*

Jan. 16: *Fr. Jacob Myers*

Jan. 30: *Ioannis*

MEMORY ETERNAL!

Please send us the names of your departed loved ones and date of their departure in order for them to be remembered.



OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

We are so very grateful to those who remember us in their prayers and show their love as generous benefactors of our Parish. We would like to thank [Tatiani Rapatzikou](#) from Thessaloniki, Greece, for the Christmas card, candles, incense and charcoal. It is very kind of you and your mother to remember us. May Christ richly bless you. We also thank [Ioanna Nassiopoulou](#), [Patricia Chiracu](#), [Miroslav Barabash' grandfather](#), and [Xenia Stavrou](#) for sending candles for our Parish. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Jan: St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Ceasarea in Cappadocia

6th Jan: The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

9th Jan: St. Adrian and St. Brithwald, Archbishops of Canterbury (†710 and †731 A.D.)

17th Jan: St. Anthony the Great

18th Jan: St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria

20th Jan: Righteous Euthymius the Great

24th Jan: St. Xenia, the Fool-for-Christ of St. Petersburg (†1803)

25th Jan: St. Gregory the Theologian

28th Jan: St. Ephraim the Syrian

30th Jan: Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs:
Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian &
John Chrysostom

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: www.calendar.goarch.org

Home blessing at Theophany! Please contact Fr. Jonathan

Services at St Martin's in January*

Sat. 6 th	10:00	Hours and Liturgy of Theophany - blessing of the waters
Sun. 7 th	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 13 th	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 14 th	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 20 th	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 21 st	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 27 th	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 28 th	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy

*Help setting up the church is greatly appreciated and starts half an hour before the service.

“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”
- St. George Karslides -



For further information please contact:

Father Jonathan Hemmings
67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ
Tel: +44 1524 840759, +44 1524 580600

Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk

www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk

www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk

The following blogs of Old Stavronians are available in Romanian, [Constiinta Ortodoxa](#), in English, [Orthodox city hermit](#), and in Greek, [Orthodoxy rainbow](#).



Top and bottom sketches are created at the Holy Monastery of "The Annunciation of the Theotokos" Chios, Greece, courtesy of Fr Theodosios Dendrinos, Ithaca, Greece.
The sketch of Christ by Rhoitis Komnoglou was scanned from the Orthodox calendar of the Apollitiki Diakonia of the Church of Greece.