

The story of the Vasilopita is a beautiful one.

In 4th century Caesarea, Cappadocia (in Asia Minor) there was a Bishop by the name of Basil, who later became St. Basil the Great. He was the first person ever to establish an orphanage for children, and the founder of the modern day Hospital. St. Basil, a very wise and compassionate clergyman, was considered to be one of the greatest philanthropists in the history of the Christian Church. St. Basil's fame as a holy man spread quickly throughout the Byzantine world. In honor of his many contributions to the Church and to his fellow brethren we bake and cute Vasilopitas with our family in his honor.

Another reason we make Vasilopitas is because 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 jewelry, including precious family heirlooms. Learning of this injustice upon his flock, St. Basil took up his bishop's staff and the book of the holy Gospels and came to his people's defense by fearlessly calling the emperor to repentance.

By God's grace, the emperor did repent! He canceled the tax and instructed his tax collectors to turn over to St. Basil all of the chests containing the coins and jewelry 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 jewelry 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!

After that, St. Basil used the same method of baking gold into bread whenever he wanted to give money anonymously to the poor of his Diocese. He came to the elderly women who baked for the area and gave them gold coins to place inside the many loaves of sweet bread. The needy families, when cutting the bread to nourish themselves, were overwhelmed and grateful to find the coins.

Our personal tradition is to cut the first piece in honor of Christ, the second for the Theotokos, St. Nektarios who is the patron saint of our marriage, and then one piece for each family member beginning with the father, then the mother, then each child in order of age. The person who finds the gold coin receives a special blessing for the upcoming new year!