

# THE SERVICE OF THE VASILOPITA



ΑΚΟΥΛΟΥΘΙΑ  
ΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΟΠΙΤΑΣ

## ΑΚΟΥΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΟΠΙΤΑΣ

**Ἱερεύς:** Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, πάντοτε, νῦν, καὶ ἀεί, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

**Λαός:** Ἀμήν.

### Ἀπολυτίκιον τῆς Ἑορτῆς

**Ε**ἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐξῆλθεν ὁ φθόγγος σου, ὡς δεξαμένην τὸν λόγον σου, δι' οὗ θεοπρεπῶς ἐδογματίσας, τὴν φύσιν τῶν ὄντων ἐτρένωσας, τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἤθη κατεκόσμησας, Βασίλειον Ἱεράτευμα, Πάτερ Ὅσιε, Χριστὸν τὸν Θεὸν ἰκέτευε, δωρήσασθαι ἡμῖν τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

**Διάκονος:** Τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

**Λαός:** Κύριε ἐλέησον.

**Ἱερεύς:** Ὁ τῶν ὄλων Δημιουργέ καὶ Βασιλεῦ τῶν αἰώνων, ὁ πολὺς ἐν ἐλέει καὶ πλούσιος ἐν ἀγαθότητι, ὁ τὰ δῶρα τῶν Μάγων ἐν Βηλεέμ προσεξάμενος, ὁ Ἄρτος τῆς Ζωῆς ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ καιροὺς καὶ χρόνους ἐν τῇ σῇ ἐξουσία θέμενος καὶ τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν εἰς χεῖράς σου διακρατῶν:

Ἐπάκουσον ἡμῶν δεομένων σου ἐν τῇ εὐσήμενῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ, ἐπὶ τῇ εἰσόδῳ ἡμῶν εἰς τὸν νέον ἐνιαυτὸν τῆς χρηστότητός σου, καὶ εὐλόγησον τὸν πλακοῦντα τούτον τὸν προσφερομένον εἰς δόξαν σὴν καὶ τιμὴν τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις Πατρὸς ἡμῶν Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Καισαρείας τῆς Καππαδοκίας.

Ἐπίβλεψον μεγαλόδωρε ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἁγίου σου καὶ κατάπεμψον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς, τοὺς τε τὰ δῶρα ταῦτα εὐτρεπίσαντας καὶ τοὺς ἐξ αὐτῶν μεταλαμβάνοντας, τὰς οὐρανίους δωρεάς σου, ὅτι ἐπὶ σοὶ ἠλπίκαμεν, τῷ ζῶντι Θεῷ, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

Εὐλόγησον τὰς εἰσόδους καὶ ἐξόδους ἡμῶν, πλήθυνον ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν καὶ κατεύθυνον τὰ διαβήματα ἡμῶν πρὸς ἐργασίαν τῶν θείων σου ἐντολῶν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐπ' ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ἄνθρωπος.

Πρεσβείαις τῆς παναχράντου σου Μητρός, τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις Πατρὸς ἡμῶν Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου καὶ πάντων σου τῶν Ἁγίων, τῶν ἀπ αἰῶνων σοι εὐαρεστησάντων.

**Λαός:** Ἀμήν.

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**Priest:** Blessed is our God always, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

### Apolytikion of the Feast

**Y**our proclamation went forth into all the earth, for it accepted your word, through which you taught the dogmas befitting God, you expounded on the nature of all that is, and you arranged the morals of society. A royal priesthood! Devout father Basil, intercede with Christ our God, to grant us His great mercy.

**Deacon:** Let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** Lord have mercy.

**Priest:** O Creator of all things, Lord and King of the ages, plenteous in mercy and bountiful in goodness, who did accept the Magi's gifts in Bethlehem, who are the Bread of life that came down from heaven, who by Your authority did establish the seasons and the years and hold our life in Your hands.

Hear us who pray to You on this holy day upon our entrance into the new year of Your goodness and bless (+) this Vasilopita, which has been offered to Your glory and in honor of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia.

Do You who are Benevolent, look down from Your holy heaven and send down upon us, upon those who have offered these gifts and upon them that partake thereof, Your heavenly gifts, for our hope is in You, the living God, unto the ages.

Bless this parish and our entrances and exits; replenish our life with all good things and direct our footsteps that we may keep Your divine commandments, for man shall not live by bread alone;

Through the intercessions of Your Most pure Mother, of our Father among the saints Basil the Great and of all Your saints who from all ages have been well pleasing to You.

**People:** Amen.

*The priest lifts the Vasilopita, kisses it, makes the sign of the cross over it with his knife and then proceeds to cut.*

## CUTTING OF THE VASILOPITA

The first piece traditionally is cut for Christ, teaching us that we offer to the Lord, the first fruits of His blessings upon us. The second piece is cut for the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and the third for St. Basil. The next piece is cut for the entire household hosting the event, and then a separate piece is cut for each family member and guest. Each person feels special and appreciated, having individually been remembered, receiving a portion of the blessed bread. Finally, a piece is always cut for the poor, reminding us to always keep a portion of our blessings for those who are in need. Hidden within one of the pieces of the Vasilopita is a coin or a small piece of jewelry. The person who receives the piece with the coin receives a special blessing. There is a strong connection between the piece of Vasilopita which is cut for St. Basil and the one that is cut for the poor. It is believed that the person who finds the coin in his piece of Vasilopita will not only come into God's good fortune for that year, but that he will also be in a position to care for the poor, widows, and orphans.

This connection is found in the teachings of the saint. "He who works ought not to work to serve his own needs but to fulfill the Lord's commandment, which says, 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat.'" (Mt. 25, 35) As we are fed by the salvific love of our Savior this blessed season, may our new year be blessed with every good gift from above, especially the gift of giving.

## HISTORY OF THE VASILOPITA



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 jewelry, 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 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! In remembrance of that miracle wrought by God as a result of St. Basil's love and defense 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.