

# SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



## JANUARY 1, 2012

### THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD, ST. BASIL THE GREAT

*On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ* was circumcised in accordance with the Old Testament Law. All male infants underwent circumcision as a sign of God's Covenant with the holy Forefather Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:10-14, Lev. 12:3).

After this ritual the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, as the Archangel Gabriel declared on the day of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos (Luke 1:31-33, 2:21). The Fathers of the Church explain that the Lord, the Creator of the Law, underwent circumcision in order to give people an example of how faithfully the divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord was circumcised so that later no one would doubt that He had truly assumed human flesh, and that His Incarnation was not merely an illusion, as certain heretics (Docetists) taught.

In the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision gave way to the Mystery of Baptism, which it prefigured (Col. 2:11-12). Accounts of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord continue in the Eastern Church right up through the fourth century. The Canon of the Feast was written by St Stephen of the St Sava Monastery (October 28 and July 13).

In addition to circumcision, which the Lord accepted as a sign of God's Covenant with mankind, He also received the Name Jesus (Savior) on the eighth day after His Nativity as an indication of His service, the work of the salvation of the world (Mt.1:21; Mark 9:38-39, 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Phil 2:9-10). These two events, the Lord's Circumcision and Naming, remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11). The very name "Christian" is a sign of mankind's entrance into a New Covenant with God.

*Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia*, "belongs not to the Church of Caesarea alone, nor merely to his own time, nor was he of benefit only to his own kinsmen, but rather to all lands and cities worldwide, and to all people he brought and still brings benefit, and for Christians he always was and will be a most salvific teacher." Thus spoke St Basil's contemporary, St Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium.

St Basil was born in the year 330 at Caesarea, the administrative center of Cappadocia. He was of illustrious lineage, famed for its eminence and wealth, and zealous for the Christian Faith. The saint's grandfather

# AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΟΡΤΗΣ. ΗΧΟΣ Α.

**Μ**ορφήν ἀναλλοιώτως ἀνθρωπίνην προσέλαβες, Θεὸς ὢν κατ' οὐσίαν, πολυεύσπλαγχνε Κύριε, καὶ Νόμον ἐκπληρῶν, περιτομὴν, θελήσει καταδέχῃ σαρκικὴν, ὅπως παύσης τὰ σκιῶδη, καὶ περιέλῃς τὸ κάλυμμα τῶν παθῶν ἡμῶν. Δόξα τῇ ἀγαθότητι τῇ σῆ, δόξα τῇ εὐσπλαγχνίᾳ σου, δόξα τῇ ἀνεκφράστῳ Λόγῃ συγκαταβάσει σου.

## ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ. ΑΠΟΛΥΤ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ.

**Τ**ὸ φαιδρὸν τῆς Ἀναστάσεως κήρυγμα, ἐκ τοῦ Ἄγγελου μαθοῦσαι αἱ τοῦ Κυρίου Μαθήτριά, καὶ τὴν προγονικὴν ἀπόφασιν ἀπορρίψασαι, τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις καυχώμεναι ἔλεγον· Ἐσκύλευται ὁ θάνατος, ἡγέρθη Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός, δωρούμενος τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος. .

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ. ΗΧΟΣ Α.

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

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΟΥ. ΠΑ. Α'.

**Λ**ουκᾶν τὸν πανύμνητον καὶ ἅγιον ἀπόστολον, τὸν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας γνωστὸν συνθέτην τῶν Πράξεων τῶν Ἀποστόλων, τὸν τε σεμνὸν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου Χριστοῦ ὑπομνηματιστήν, ἀξίως τιμῶμεν ὕμνοις ὁσίοις, ὡς νοσημάτων ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ φυσικῶν ἀσθενειῶν θεραπευτήν, τὸν καθαίροντα πηλῆγὰς τοῦ πνεύματος, καὶ ἀδιαλείπτως πρεσβεύοντα ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.

## ΚΟΝΤΑΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ Γ.

**Ῥ**ῶτῶν ὄλων Κύριος, περιτομὴν ὑπομένει, καὶ βροτῶν τὰ πταίσματα, ὡς ἀγαθὸς περιτέμνει, δίδωσι τὴν σωτηρίαν σήμερον κόσμῳ χαίρει δὲ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις καὶ ὁ τοῦ Κτίστου, Ἰεράρχης καὶ φωσφόρος, ὁ θεῖος μύστης Χριστοῦ Βασιλείος.

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΟΡΤΗΣ. ΜΟΔΕ 1.

**I**n essence being God, most-compassionate Master, \* You assumed human nature without transmutation. \* Fulfilling the Law, of Your own will \* You accepted circumcision in the flesh, \* to bring an end to the shadow, and to remove the passions that cover us. \* Glory to Your benevolence, O Lord; \* glory to Your compassion; \* glory to Your inexpressible condescension, O Word.

## RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION. ΜΟΔΕ 4.

**W**hen the women Disciples of the Lord had learned from the Angel the joyful message of the Resurrection and had rejected the ancestral decision, they cried aloud to the Apostles triumphantly: Death has been despoiled, Christ God has risen, granting His great mercy to the world.

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ. ΜΟΔΕ 1.

**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.

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟΝ. ΜΟΔΕ 5.

**T**he holy Apostle, the All-hymned Luke, \* who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ \* as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles, \* and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ. \* Let us praise with sacred hymns as a physician, \* who heals the infirmities of man, \* and the ailments of nature, \* who cleanses spiritual wounds, and prays unceasingly for our souls.

## ΚΟΝΤΑΚΙΟΝ. ΜΟΔΕ 3.

**T**he Lord of all, patiently endures and is circumcised for the iniquities of mankind; for he is good, and grants salvation to the world. And in the highest the High Priest of the Creator, clothed with light, the divine initiate of Christ, Basil, rejoices.

# THE READINGS OF THE DAY

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## EPISTLE READING

### THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS 2:8-12

**B**RETHREN, see to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

“*The one whose joy is stable, solid and penetrating, is he who knows of God’s presence among all things, with all things, and in all things. Even as in the temple, so, too, in the school. Even as in the Church, so, too, in the field. From the brightest star to the smallest blade of grass, he sees the beautiful mystery of Christ present as all in all.*”

—ANONYMOUS”

## GOSPEL READING

### LUKE 2:20-21, 40-52

**A**t that time, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day’s journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.” And he said to them, “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

**Wednesday, January 4, The Eve of Theophany, Vespers, Div. Lit. and Blessing of Waters, 5pm**

**Thursday, January 5, Great Vespers for Theophany, 5pm**

**Friday, January 6, Theophany of our Lord, Orthros / Div. Lit. and Blessing of Waters, 8:30am**

**Saturday, January 7, Great Vespers, 5pm**

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### SPECIAL FUND RAISING DRIVE

Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners, we reached our goal of getting at least 10ea. \$1000 donations before the New Year. We received a total of \$11,500 in donations. Those donations will be kindly doubled by George Kritos. Thank you to all who participated in this special drive!

### CUTTING OF THE VASILOPITA

Each year on the first day of the New Year we celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Basil the Great, our Church Father who studied, wrote manuscripts, established a soup kitchen, distributed food to the poor, offered medical assistance and served through love those in his community.

For many years, since the purchase of the Academy in 1944, the women of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society demonstrate their commitment by organizing the Vasilopita Events in their Church communities on the Feast Day of St. Basil. The collect proceeds from a special tray collection which is passed to support the Vasilopita Fund. The beneficiaries of your love and compassion are the children of the St. Basil Academy.

The Academy is a warm and inviting residence in Garrison, New York, offering a nurturing environment while attending to the children's developmental, educational, spiritual and material needs. At the Academy, the children attend excellent schools that offer the best in academic and extra-

curricular programs, are educated in and practice their Greek Orthodox faith each and every day and are embraced spiritually and emotionally. The mission of the Academy is to offer shelter, protection, love and education for our young people so they are able to grow up as healthy, wholesome, well-rounded Orthodox Christians.

Please support this program by making a donation when we offer the special tray. May the Lord bless you and your families in the New Year 2012 with good health, joy and peace.

### STEWARDSHIP MATERIALS

Have you returned your 2012 Stewardship materials? If not, please do so as soon as possible. Your generous support is what keeps our parish ministries functioning.. Thank you!

### NEW CATECHISM CLASS

The beginning date for a new series of catechism classes for those wishing to be received into the Orthodox Church has changed. The new beginning date will be Thursday January 5, at 6:30pm.

### PHILOPTOCHOS

The Philoptochos New Year party will be held at the Olive Garden on January 3, 6pm. Please RSVP to Ina as soon as possible.

## SYNTAXARION

and grandmother on his father's side had to hide in the forests of Pontus for seven years during the persecution under Diocletian.

St Basil's mother St Emilia was the daughter of a martyr. On the Greek calendar, she is commemorated on May 30. St Basil's father was also named Basil. He was a lawyer and renowned rhetorician, and lived at Caesarea.

Ten children were born to the elder Basil and Emilia: five sons and five daughters. Five of them were later numbered among the saints: Basil the Great; Macrina (July 19) was an exemplar of ascetic life, and exerted strong influence on the life and character of St Basil the Great; Gregory, afterwards Bishop of Nyssa (January 10); Peter, Bishop of Sebaste (January 9); and Theosebia, a deaconess (January 10).

St Basil spent the first years of his life on an estate belonging to his parents at the River Iris, where he was raised under the supervision of his mother Emilia and grandmother Macrina. They were women of great refinement, who remembered an earlier bishop of Cappadocia, St Gregory the Wonderworker (November 17). Basil received his initial education under the supervision of his father, and then he studied under the finest teachers in Caesarea of Cappadocia, and it was here that he made the acquaintance of St Gregory the Theologian (January 25 and January 30). Later, Basil transferred to a school at Constantinople, where he listened to eminent orators and philosophers. To complete his education St Basil went to Athens, the center of classical enlightenment.

After a four or five year stay at Athens, Basil had mastered all the available disciplines. "He studied everything thoroughly, more than others are wont to study a single subject. He studied each science in its very totality, as though he would study nothing

else." Philosopher, philologist, orator, jurist, naturalist, possessing profound knowledge in astronomy, mathematics and medicine, "he was a ship fully laden with learning, to the extent permitted by human nature."

At Athens a close friendship developed between Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzus), which continued throughout their life. In fact, they regarded themselves as one soul in two bodies. Later on, in his eulogy for Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian speaks with delight about this period: "Various hopes guided us, and indeed inevitably, in learning... Two paths opened up before us: the one to our sacred temples and the teachers therein; the other towards preceptors of disciplines beyond."

About the year 357, St Basil returned to Caesarea, where for a while he devoted himself to rhetoric. But soon, refusing offers from Caesarea's citizens who wanted to entrust him with the education of their offspring, St Basil entered upon the path of ascetic life.

After the death of her husband, Basil's mother, her eldest daughter Macrina, and several female servants withdrew to the family estate at Iris and there began to lead an ascetic life. Basil was baptized by Dianios, the Bishop of Caesarea, and was tonsured a Reader (On the Holy Spirit, 29). He first read the Holy Scriptures to the people, then explained them.

Later on, "wishing to acquire a guide to the knowledge of truth", the saint undertook a journey into Egypt, Syria and Palestine, to meet the great Christian ascetics dwelling there. On returning to Cappadocia, he decided to do as they did. He distributed his wealth to the needy, then settled on the opposite side of the river not far from his mother

Emilia and sister Macrina, gathering around him monks living a cenobitic life.

By his letters, Basil drew his good friend Gregory the Theologian to the monastery. Sts Basil and Gregory labored in strict abstinence in their dwelling place, which had no roof or fireplace, and the food was very humble. They themselves cleared away the stones, planted and watered the trees, and carried heavy loads. Their hands were constantly calloused from the hard work. For clothing Basil had only a tunic and monastic mantle. He wore a hairshirt, but only at night, so that it would not be obvious.

In their solitude, Sts Basil and Gregory occupied themselves in an intense study of Holy Scripture. They were guided by the writings of the Fathers and commentators of the past, especially the good writings of Origen. From all these works they compiled an anthology called *Philokalia*. Also at this time, at the request of the monks, St Basil wrote down a collection of rules for virtuous life. By his preaching and by his example St Basil assisted in the spiritual perfection of Christians in Cappadocia and Pontus; and many indeed turned to him. Monasteries were organized for men and for women, in which places Basil sought to combine the cenobitic (koine bios, or common) lifestyle with that of the solitary hermit.

During the reign of Constantius (337-361) the heretical teachings of Arius were spreading, and the Church summoned both its saints into service. St Basil returned to Caesarea. In the year 362 he was ordained deacon by Bishop Meletius of Antioch. In 364 he was ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. "But seeing," as Gregory the Theologian relates, "that everyone exceedingly praised and honored Basil for his wisdom and reverence, Eusebius, through human weakness, succumbed to jealousy of him, and began to show

dislike for him." The monks rose up in defense of St Basil. To avoid causing Church discord, Basil withdrew to his own monastery and concerned himself with the organization of monasteries.

With the coming to power of the emperor Valens (364-378), who was a resolute adherent of Arianism, a time of troubles began for Orthodoxy, the onset of a great struggle. St Basil hastily returned to Caesarea at the request of Bishop Eusebius. In the words of Gregory the Theologian, he was for Bishop Eusebius "a good advisor, a righteous representative, an expounder of the Word of God, a staff for the aged, a faithful support in internal matters, and an activist in external matters."

From this time church governance passed over to Basil, though he was subordinate to the hierarchy. He preached daily, and often twice, in the morning and in the evening. During this time St Basil composed his Liturgy. He wrote a work "On the Six Days of Creation" (*Hexaemeron*) and another on the Prophet Isaiah in sixteen chapters, yet another on the Psalms, and also a second compilation of monastic rules. St Basil wrote also three books "Against Eunomius," an Arian teacher who, with the help of Aristotelian concepts, had presented the Arian dogma in philosophic form, converting Christian teaching into a logical scheme of rational concepts.

St Gregory the Theologian, speaking about the activity of Basil the Great during this period, points to "the caring for the destitute and the taking in of strangers, the supervision of virgins, written and unwritten monastic rules for monks, the arrangement of prayers [Liturgy], the felicitous arrangement of altars and other things." Upon the death of Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, St Basil was chosen to succeed him in the year 370. As Bishop of Caesarea, St Basil the Great was the newest of fifty bishops in eleven provinces. St Athanasius the Great (May 2),

with joy and with thanks to God welcomed the appointment to Cappadocia of such a bishop as Basil, famed for his reverence, deep knowledge of Holy Scripture, great learning, and his efforts for the welfare of Church peace and unity.

Under Valens, the external government belonged to the Arians, who held various opinions regarding the divinity of the Son of God, and were divided into several factions. These dogmatic disputes were concerned with questions about the Holy Spirit. In his books *Against Eunomios*, St Basil the Great taught the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His equality with the Father and the Son. Subsequently, in order to provide a full explanation of Orthodox teaching on this question, St Basil wrote his book *On the Holy Spirit* at the request of St Amphilochius, the Bishop of Iconium.

St Basil's difficulties were made worse by various circumstances: Cappadocia was divided in two under the rearrangement of provincial districts. Then at Antioch a schism occurred, occasioned by the consecration of a second bishop. There was the negative and haughty attitude of Western bishops to the attempts to draw them into the struggle with the Arians. And there was also the departure of Eustathius of Sebaste over to the Arian side. Basil had been connected to him by ties of close friendship. Amidst the constant perils St Basil gave encouragement to the Orthodox, confirmed them in the Faith, summoning them to bravery and endurance. The holy bishop wrote numerous letters to the churches, to bishops, to clergy and to individuals. Overcoming the heretics "by the weapon of his mouth, and by the arrows of his letters," as an untiring champion of Orthodoxy, St Basil challenged the hostility and intrigues of the Arian heretics all his life. He has been compared to a bee, stinging the Church's enemies, yet nourishing his flock with the sweet honey of his teaching.

The emperor Valens, mercilessly sending into exile any bishop who displeased him, and having implanted Arianism into other Asia Minor provinces, suddenly appeared in Cappadocia for this same purpose. He sent the prefect Modestus to St Basil. He began to threaten the saint with the confiscation of his property, banishment, beatings, and even death.

St Basil said, "If you take away my possessions, you will not enrich yourself, nor will you make me a pauper. You have no need of my old worn-out clothing, nor of my few books, of which the entirety of my wealth is comprised. Exile means nothing to me, since I am bound to no particular place. This place in which I now dwell is not mine, and any place you send me shall be mine. Better to say: every place is God's. Where would I be neither a stranger and sojourner (Ps. 38/39:13)? Who can torture me? I am so weak, that the very first blow would render me insensible. Death would be a kindness to me, for it will bring me all the sooner to God, for Whom I live and labor, and to Whom I hasten."

The official was stunned by his answer. "No one has ever spoken so audaciously to me," he said.

"Perhaps," the saint remarked, "that is because you've never spoken to a bishop before. In all else we are meek, the most humble of all. But when it concerns God, and people rise up against Him, then we, counting everything else as naught, look to Him alone. Then fire, sword, wild beasts and iron rods that rend the body, serve to fill us with joy, rather than fear."

Reporting to Valens that St Basil was not to be intimidated, Modestus said, "Emperor, we stand defeated by a leader of the Church." Basil the Great again showed firmness before the emperor and his retinue and made such a strong impression on

Valens that the emperor dared not give in to the Arians demanding Basil's exile. "On the day of Theophany, amidst an innumerable multitude of the people, Valens entered the church and mixed in with the throng, in order to give the appearance of being in unity with the Church. When the singing of Psalms began in the church, it was like thunder to his hearing. The emperor beheld a sea of people, and in the altar and all around was splendor; in front of all was Basil, who acknowledged neither by gesture nor by glance, that anything else was going on in church." Everything was focused only on God and the altar-table, and the clergy serving there in awe and reverence.

St Basil celebrated the church services almost every day. He was particularly concerned about the strict fulfilling of the Canons of the Church, and took care that only worthy individuals should enter into the clergy. He incessantly made the rounds of his own church, lest anywhere there be an infraction of Church discipline, and setting aright any unseemliness. At Caesarea, St Basil built two monasteries, a men's and a women's, with a church in honor of the Forty Martyrs (March 9) whose relics were buried there. Following the example of monks, the saint's clergy, even deacons and priests, lived in remarkable poverty, to toil and lead chaste and virtuous lives. For his clergy St Basil obtained an exemption from taxation. He used all his personal wealth and the income from his church for the benefit of the destitute; in every center of his diocese he built a poor-house; and at Caesarea, a home for wanderers and the homeless.

Sickly since youth, the toil of teaching, his life of abstinence, and the concerns and sorrows of pastoral service took their toll on him. St Basil died on January 1, 379 at age 49. Shortly before his death, the saint blessed St Gregory the Theologian to accept the See of Constantinople.

Upon the repose of St Basil, the Church immediately began to celebrate his memory. St Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (November 23), in his eulogy to St Basil the Great, said: "It is neither without a reason nor by chance that holy Basil has taken leave from the body and had repose from the world unto God on the day of the Circumcision of Jesus, celebrated between the day of the Nativity and the day of the Baptism of Christ. Therefore, this most blessed one, preaching and praising the Nativity and Baptism of Christ, extolling spiritual circumcision, himself forsaking the flesh, now ascends to Christ on the sacred day of remembrance of the Circumcision of Christ. Therefore, let it also be established on this present day annually to honor the memory of Basil the Great festively and with solemnity."

St Basil is also called "the revealer of heavenly mysteries" (Ouranophantor), a "renowned and bright star," and "the glory and beauty of the Church." His honorable head is in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.

In some countries it is customary to sing special carols today in honor of St Basil. He is believed to visit the homes of the faithful, and a place is set for him at the table. People visit the homes of friends and relatives, and the mistress of the house gives a small gift to the children. A special bread (Vasilopita) is blessed and distributed after the Liturgy. A silver coin is baked into the bread, and whoever receives the slice with the coin is said to receive the blessing of St Basil for the coming year.