



SAINT BASIL DAY AGIOS VASILIOS 2017

Peter Adamis Abalinx 1 January 2016

On the 1 January every year the Adamis clan gathers together for the traditional Greek Orthodox celebration of Saint Basil or Agios Vasilios. All those whose name is associated with st basil celebrates their name day on the first day of January.

According to tradition St Basil was born in Asia Minor now considered part of Turkey. He was known for his brilliant intellect, compassion for the poor and also for having laid the foundations for those considering a monastic life.

Families, friends and relatives gather on the first day of January and partake in a feast that was full of merriment, good food, drinks, music and dance. This is always followed by partaking in the sharing and eating of the traditional 'vasilópita' a form of round flat sweet bread that is often glazed with egg to give it a shining look. Inside within the vasilópita is a coin embedded within it. The coin is mixed in with the dough and baked in order that no one knows the exact location of its whereabouts. Tradition dictates that whoever is served with the coin is to have good luck for the remainder of the year.

To get a better understanding of the traditions surrounding Saint Basil, I leave that to the experts who have a greater theological understanding of what the special meaning is associated with St Basil. Further reading may be garnered from visiting the following link: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/St.+Basil's+Day>

Suffice to say, we of the Adamis clan and associated families would traditionally congregate at our parents' home to celebrate our father's name day. Vasili, or Bill to his Aussie mates would hold great parties in his youth at a time when such parties going on during New Year's Day was not something that was expected back in the fifties. Sometimes Police constables would turn up on our door step in Windsor, Prahran to advise Dad to keep the noise down as it was upsetting the neighbours.

After a while we began to realise that the Police constables were coming to our door not to complain but to partake in the festivities with Dad, to have a break from work and have a beer on the quiet. After some time, when honour had been satisfied, the constables would leave knowing that they had done their job without too much hassle and at the same time enjoyed themselves once more at Bills place. The constables never went away empty handed that was for sure. Wink, wink, nudge, nudge; "now Bill make sure you keep the noise down" said the constables as they walked out the door with a couple of bottles under each arm. Beer bottles of Carlton Bitter were big in those days.

As we grew older, it was heresy not to have attended the old man's open dinner invitation and words would be said at a later date as to why friends and relatives did not turn up. Mum and Dads parties were legendary in the Fifties and early Sixties and those who had newly arrived from the old country always made their way to 98 Union Street Windsor to see Mum and Dad. Many had arrived by foot, some by taxi and some by train holding in their hand the address of Mum and Dad given to them by relatives from the old country.

They were always told, when you get to Australia, see Vasili and Kaliopi and they will look after you. Mum and Dad never turned anyone away and that was one of the reasons why so many people came and went through our little home in Windsor. All of those who came to our home were referred to as uncles and aunties as we were brought up to call those older than us, Auntie and Uncle out of respect. To this day some 60 years later, I still refer to them who are still alive as Uncle and Auntie out of respect.

When I was posted to Geelong and Ballarat after a bitter divorce and the loss of three custody cases, the Army embraced me and looked after me whilst I was battling the odds to win back my four sons. Arrangements were made through the court system to pick up the boys from my Uncle Spiro and Auntie Marika (recently deceased) in Brunswick, and take them back to either Geelong or Ballarat, depending upon where I was posted at the time. I had somehow managed to win some minor cases where I was able to have the boys on special days in order that they did not lose track of their heritage and cultural origins. New Year's Day was one of them and the judge had recognised the importance of maintaining close links with the extended family, traditions and culture.

When New Year's Day arrived the boys and I bundled into the car and drove the 100 or so kilometres to Dads house to celebrate his name day. No one expected us to be there because of the distance, but knew that it was one of the few days that the Adamis, Rassias and Smirnios clans would be congregating. In addition there would be the gathering of the Roumeliotis, Bakis, Morphis, Tsotsios, Karagiannis, Glekas, Zouzoulas, Triantafillou, Kamberras, Koulogiannis, Gomasos clans, all coming to celebrate Dads name day. Then there were the numerous friends who although unrelated had become linked with the Adamis family over the years. No one was turned away and one wonders how on earth Mum and Dad catered for such large gatherings. I would find out later that the trick to the catering was that the women folk would take to each other and every family brought something along. The boys therefore grew up amongst a warm and loving environment despite the difficulties of the separation and divorce of their parents. Problems would arise later when all the four boys and I were reunited after an absence of four years apart, but that's another story.

2017 was no different to previous years with Dad was in fine form at 88 years old or 89 according to the Greek tradition. He was chuckling away, making his witty comments and the odd joke that only Greeks could understand. The Greek banter in Greek has its own sense of humour similar to that of the Australian banter but with a twist to it that only language can distinguish the difference.

This year most of the boys made the journey and for those that could not do so it was either the tyranny of distance or work related. Comparing the past with the present, to be sure the ranks had thinned out over the years, but the atmosphere was still the same, the laughter and jocularly no different, as well as the good food, and drink? These days young brother Kon takes the centre stage as the host and makes the customary speech, highlighting the fact that as the youngest he deserves to win the coin within the vasilópita. He would state that as the host he had examined the vasilópita and could not find where it was embedded and therefor the vasilópita was a dinky di one that had not been tampered with. I am of the opinion that the bastard just could not find it using conventional means. Still it was all part of the fun and we heckled him for his attempts to find the coin. This year my young niece Haido won the coin but according to 'reliable sources' it is was allegedly stolen by her young daughter Zoe, so the Jury is still out on who ended up with the coin. (True story).

This year Paul was working, Matthew, Jane and Anika were stuck in Leopold, Nick was at work; Conrad was in Norway and the 'Prince' of the family William was working. It was good to see Alex and Carly down from Sydney upon which Carly advised us that she is expecting sometime in May. Cassie's Mum was over from New Zealand, while George and Kaylene (Wendy's sister and brother in law were down from Queensland). Lees parents were unable to make it due to health reasons, but little Tyler was there in full form.

Dad is now the Patriarch of the Adamis clan, since his elder sister Aiki passed away recently in the old country. Dad has seen much and his experiences during the Greek Civil war and subsequent journey to the other side of the world had certainly toughened him to withstand and overcoming the challenges he faced over the years. One tough bloke the old man, I must say. Gone are the days of large parties, no visits from Police constables, gone are the numerous visitors, friends and acquaintances from the past, replaced with the clans associated with the family.

Many have since moved on and others are no longer with us, but the memories of the past still linger on and that is what is important to those of us still here to celebrate Dad's Name Day. We all wish that the good days go on forever but life has other challenges and journeys for us to take and when that time comes we just enjoy the moment with family an good friends. That is what Saint Basil's day means to the family, being together. As always, apologies to purists for my poor grammar and savagery of the English language. I wish you all well and hope that this article does not cause ambiguity in the minds of those who read it.



Peter Adamis is a Journalist/Social Media Commentator and writer. He is a retired Australian military serviceman and an Industry organisational & Occupational (OHS) & Training Consultant whose interests are within the parameters of domestic and international political spectrum. He is an avid blogger and contributes to domestic and international community news media outlets as well as to local and Ethnic News. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning & Development (Monash), Grad Dip Occupational Health & Safety, (Monash), Dip. Training & Assessment, Dip Public Administration, and Dip Frontline Management. Contact via Email: abalinx@netspace.net.au

Photo Album.

St Basil's day pictures were also pinched from my young niece Haido, so I cannot take all the credit for the photographs. She beat me to displaying them on Social media and they are included as part of this year's celebrations. May 2017 be kind to everyone.





































