

Greek Christmas Traditions

- **Kalanda (Carols):** On Christmas Eve, kids go singing carols in the streets. They play drums and triangles, and sometimes carry boats decorated with nuts. If they sing well, they get treats like money, nuts, sweets, and dried figs.



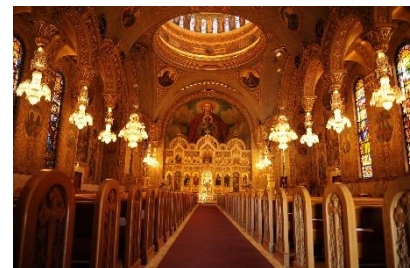
- **Kallikantzaroi (Bad Spirits):** There are funny, naughty creatures called "kallikantzaroi" that come from the earth during Christmas. They try to make mischief, like putting out fires or spoiling milk. People keep fires burning and use holy water to scare them away.

- **Basil Cross:** In many homes, a sprig of basil is tied to a wooden cross and put in a bowl of water. Each day, the mother sprinkles water in the rooms to keep bad spirits away.



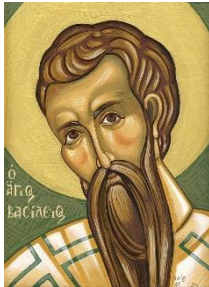
- **Christmas Decorations:** In some places, you see decorated boats instead of trees! Boats were put up in homes by sailors when they came back from the sea. Now, people like to have both a Christmas tree and a boat.

- **Midnight Mass:** Many Greek people go to church on Christmas Eve for a special midnight service to celebrate Jesus' birth.



- **Christmas Food:** On Christmas Day, people eat lamb or pork with pie, salads, and vegetables. They also eat sweet treats like **Baklava** (a nutty pastry), **Melomakarono** (honey cookies with walnuts), and **Kourabiedes** (buttery cookies).

- **Christopsomo (Christ's Bread):** A special round bread is made on Christmas Eve, flavored with cinnamon, orange, and cloves. It has a cross on top and is eaten on Christmas Day.



- **Saint Basil (Aghios Vassilis):** In Greece, Aghios Vassilis (Saint Basil) brings gifts to children on **January 1st**, not Christmas Day.

Fun Facts:

- People in Greece say "**Kala Christougenna**" for **Merry Christmas**.
- Christmas trees and boats are both popular decorations in Greece!

