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BASIL

October 4, 2023

I love to cook. Of course, most cooks who really get into it like to grow their own fresh herbs; hence, I have attempted to grow my own basil.

As it would happen, my daughter sent me a wonderful book entitled Cooking with the Saints, by Alexandra Greely. And the first recipe was for St Basil's Cake. Of course, as I am wont to do, I started reading about St. Basil himself.

He was born in Cappadocia, which is modern day Turkey, in the fourth century. He had an extraordinary family inasmuch as both parents have been declared saints in addition to four of his siblings.

He studied in Athens and became friends with St; Gregory. He taught rhetoric and practiced law but his real love was service to God and His people. Together with St. Gregory he led an ascetic life in rustic dwellings devoting their lives to prayer and helping the poor. He was a founder of Eastern Monasticism and believed community was more important than being isolated as a hermit.

He is noted as an influential theologian and became an advocate of what we now know as the Nicene creed. In addition he was a strong advocate of the equality of the sexes and was against slavery.

St. Basil's cake itself traces its origin to a centuries-old legend in the tradition of Orthodox Christian families. Throughout his life St. Basil, in addition to coming from a very wealthy family, showed tremendous care for the poor. To help his flock he negotiated the return of the jewelry and precious stones that the unjust Imperial government had demanded as a tax from the people

[I like that part]

St. Basil baked all of the treasures into one huge cake which he distributed among his faithful. Miraculously, each person found his own possessions in the piece of cake he received.

With that inspirational food story I decided to grow my own basil for the first time. How hard could it be? I consulted with those great repositories of information and wisdom Google and Youtube and planted my basil in the perfect pot with the perfectly prepared soil and the exact amount of fertilizer and water as measured by my recently purchased hydrometer. Every weekend for four weeks I clipped the tops as directed by the experts.

Then came a heavy weekend of rain. Three days later gray-brown smudges started to appear on my precious basil leaves. A quick look at my expert sources noted above provided the devastating diagnosis: irreparable mildew and fungus along with the recommendation to destroy all the plants and sterilize the soil and prepare for next year.

I wont be discouraged or give up. I will try again next year.

But I'm not stupid; first a will say a prayer to St. Basil.

Amen