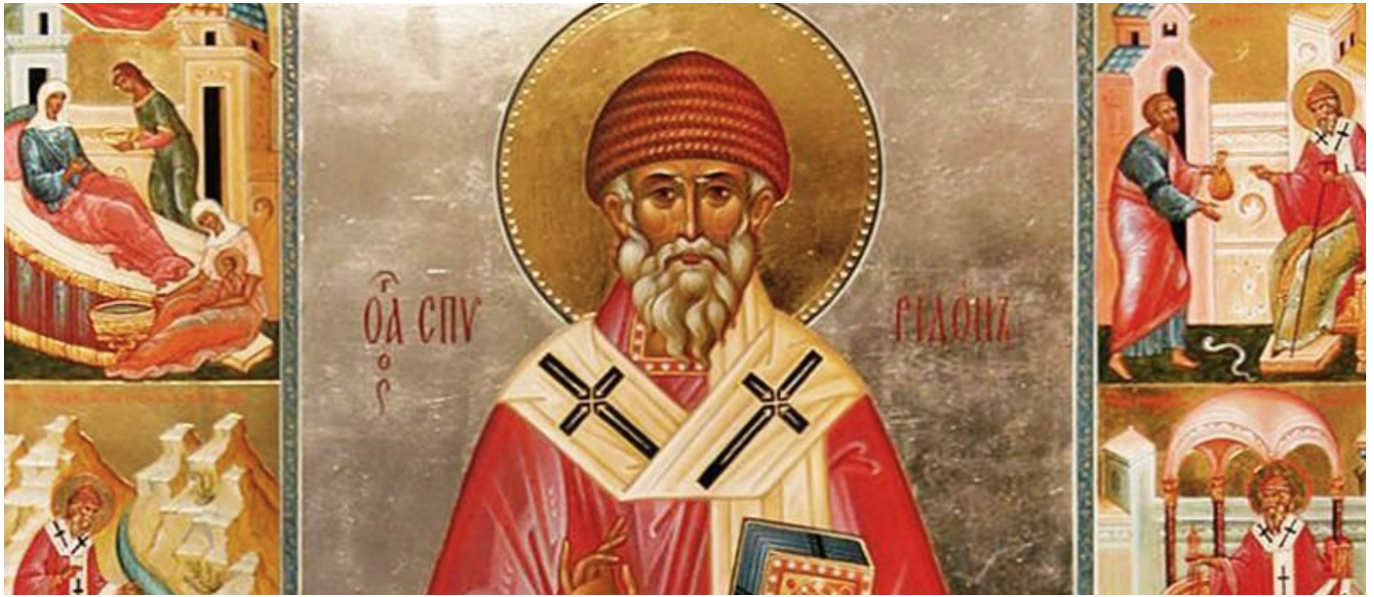


## Saint Spyridon in the holiday calendar of Bulgarians



The memory and deeds of St. Spyridon, one of the great wonderworkers of the IV century, is celebrated by the Orthodox Church on December 12. Born on the island of Cyprus to a poor family, he became a shepherd at an early age. He was humble and kind. According to the custom, when he reached the appropriate age, he married, but soon his wife passed away. He then devoted himself entirely to helping the poor and suffering. He had the gift of curing various diseases and people came to him from various places. He preserved his modesty even after being appointed bishop of Trimythous on the island of Cyprus. He continued to help people, even working in the fields with the farmers and continued to wear his shepherd's crook and willow branch hat, as icons depict him.

In Bulgaria's traditional culture St. Spyridon is considered to be the patron saint of craftsmen – shoemakers, potters, bricklayers and others. As Bishop, St. Spyridon participated in the First Ecumenical Council. It is known that at that time there were fierce disputes with Arius and his followers, who did not recognize the trinity of God, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Spyridon did not get into an argument but performed a miracle, which proved the Trinity – he took a shard to show how a entity could be composed of three unique things and when he finished speaking the shard miraculously burst into flame, water dripped on the ground, and only dust remained in his hands. Probably, this is the reason, St. Spyridon is revered as a protector of people who make pottery with the help of fire water and earth.

It is believed that St. Spyridon was the first to discover how to make a strong clay vessel. At first he tried only clay, but failed. Saddened by the failure, he wept and his tears made the clay workable. He made the vessel, burned it and so gave this craft to the people. The saint is also the patron saint of coppersmiths, because he was the first to reveal the secret of tin plating with the help of ammonium chloride.

It is also widely believed that St. Spyridon protects against rashes and wounds. In the Rhodope region, on this day women gave cakes to each other for health. In the Plovdiv region on this day it was forbidden to boil beans, corn, lentils, etc. in order to prevent rashes on the body. In the Pirin region St. Spyridon was revered as the patron saint of horses and cattle. Early in the morning, the women went out and gave ritual bread to keep the animals healthy. In settlements near Troyan there is a folk legend that on December 12 the sun stops moving and takes the way back to summer.