

The legend of St. Clare and the hot cross buns

Clare of Assisi's reputation for holiness spread throughout Italy, eventually reaching the Holy Father. Anxious to meet this remarkable woman, the pope traveled to her monastery to talk with her.

As a gesture of hospitality, Clare asked that loaves of bread be placed on the tables. She wanted the pope to bless the bread, which would then be given to the sisters as a keepsake of his visit. But the pope declined, saying instead, "Very faithful Sr. Clare, I want you to bless these loaves of bread, making over them the sign of the cross." Clare hesitated, saying she was unworthy to do such a blessing.

But the pope insisted, and finally commanded her to make the sign of the cross and bless the bread. Clare reluctantly did. When she finished praying, an image of a cross miraculously appeared on each loaf.

Legend says that this began the practice of making a cross on hot cross buns.

From the 2012 Lenten booklet *The Little Black Book*