



make sweet rolls, the koulourakia, and the following day they do the housework, while in the evening they follow the blessing of Holy Oil that takes place in church.

· Holy Thursday is the day for dyeing eggs. In the evening, after the reading of the 12 Gospel, the girls undertake the decoration of the bier of Christ (epitaphios) with garlands of white and purple flowers, so that in the morning of Good Friday it is ready to receive the image of the body of Christ when He is taken down from the cross.

· Good Friday, or Megali Paraskevi, is a day of mourning. The drama of the death of Christ is followed with great devoutness. Sweet things are not eaten for the love of Christ, who was given vinegar

to drink. Soup made with sesame-paste, lettuce or lentils with vinegar is the food eaten on this day. It is considered a great sin to work with a hammer or nails or sew on Good Friday.

· Vesper evening on Good Friday is followed by the procession of the bier (representing Christ's funeral). A band or choir playing or singing solemn music precedes the procession; they are followed by the cantors, the clergy, women bearing myrrh, the altar boys carrying the liturgical fans, scouts and guides, and the people of the region, who sing the hymns throughout the procession. All along its route, people scatter flowers and perfumes on the epitaphios (bier), holding lighted candles in their hands.

· On Holy Saturday evening, the Resurrection mass (Anastasi = resurrection, the Resurrection of Jesus) takes place. At midnight the ceremony of lighting of candles is the most significant moment of the year. People, carefully, take home their lighted candles with the holy light of the Resurrection. Before entering their houses they make a cross with the smoke of the candle on top of the door, they light the oil candle before their icon-stand, and try to keep this light burning throughout the year.

The Midnight service is without a doubt the most important day on the calendar. At midnight all the lights are extinguished in the church and the priest comes from behind the doors on the altar carrying a candle. He walks to someone in the front row and lights their candle and these people who receive the light of the resurrection, the light is a symbol of the resurrection, pass the light from candle to candle and the light fills the church. Everybody leaves the church just before midnight, singing a song the words of which mean, Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. Through death conquering death. At midnight at the moment of the resurrection all the families have gone to church together, all standing sort of huddled in these little insular units and everybody kisses everybody and say, 'Christos anesti, Christos anesti, Christ has risen, indeed He has risen. And it's a very touching moment. In the moment of conquering death, it has a certain meaning to kiss your grandparents at that point, who you know you'll be

burying soon. And to be kissing the children who are coming up, who will be replacing you in the next generation. And there's a feeling of the weight of centuries. People have been saying these prayers unchanged for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years.

In Crete it's a custom to carry this candle back home, taking care the flame is not extinguished. At the house 3 crosses are made with the flame above the entrance door: the black soot 'paints' the crosses, in order to bless the house and its inhabitants by the light of Christ's resurrection.

It is customary for young people to light a huge bonfire in the churchyard to burn Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus. On Easter Sunday, after the Easter Service at 12 midday, traditional entertainment with the participation of all people is organised. Fasting has ended (The Great Fast (Lent)—beginning on a Monday 7 weeks before Easter) and huge dishes of lamb are enjoyed. The Greeks have many traditions on this day, however the most important is gathering the family together and roasting a lamb, rotisserie-style, ('Arni Pashalino tis Souvlas': Easter Lamb on the Spit) in their front yards. The whole country does this, every family, hence, everywhere you find a very thick smoke and smell.

Modern Greek Easter nowadays is less traditional in urban areas, specially in and around Athens and Thessaloniki. People take a holiday break, causing massive traffic jams and no single domestic flight's seat is empty.

## Orthodox Easter in Australia

Many Orthodox Christians in Australia celebrate Jesus Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. The Orthodox Christian date for Easter Sunday is often observed at a later date than the Easter date observed by many western churches. The day is known as Pascha, as well as the Sunday of the Resurrection.

### What do people do?

Many Orthodox Christians in Australia celebrate Pascha according to the Easter date in the Julian calendar. Easter is the most important event in the church calendar. The Easter Sunday church liturgies are joyous as they celebrate Jesus Christ's resurrection, according to Christian belief, as well as spiritual victory.

Many Orthodox Christians in Australia fast during Lent prior to Easter. Easter Sunday is a time for families and friends to get together for a festive meal, where meat and dairy products can be eaten again. Lamb and tsourekia (or tsoureki), which is a type of Easter bread, are popular Easter dishes in many Greek Orthodox communities in Australia.

Traditional Easter egg games are also popular. Each person takes a dyed red egg and tries to crack other challengers' eggs. This game symbolizes Jesus Christ breaking from his tomb. The person whose egg lasts the longest is assured good luck for the rest of the year. Some people bring dyed Easter eggs to church to be blessed at the Easter liturgy.

Special egg painting workshops for pysanky (special type of Easter eggs) are held in some cities, such as Sydney, prior to the Orthodox Easter date. These beautifully decorated eggs are customary in some eastern European countries such as the Ukraine. Many people are banned from setting off fireworks during the Easter celebrations. Fireworks can only

be used by a licensed pyrotechnician in many places, such as the state of Victoria.

### Public life

The Orthodox Christian date for Easter Sunday is not a federal public holiday in Australia. However, it is held on a Sunday, which is a non-school day and non-working day for many Australians. Sunday trading hours still apply in areas where there is Sunday trading, particularly in major cities.

### Background

Many Orthodox churches base their Easter date on the Julian calendar, which differs from the Gregorian calendar that is used by many western countries. Therefore the Orthodox Easter period often occurs later than the Easter period that falls around the time of the .

There are different types of Orthodox churches in Australia, including the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. There are many Greek Orthodox Christians in Australia. The federal government's 2006 census recorded that there were 109,980 Greece-born people in Australia, with the largest numbers in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, and Queensland. The census also showed that 100,460 Greece-born Australians are of the Eastern Orthodox faith.

### Symbols

The Easter egg is hard-boiled and dyed red to symbolize the blood of Christ. It was an important symbol connected with spring fertility rituals in many early civilizations. Many Greek

Orthodox Christians rap their eggs against their friends' eggs and the owner of the last uncracked egg is considered lucky.

The Orthodox custom of decorating the round Easter bread with red eggs at the four edges of the cross on the bread dates back to around the 12th century. Another important symbol associated with Easter is the lamb. It is often depicted with a banner that bears a cross, and it is known as the Agnus Dei, meaning "Lamb of God" in Latin.

### What do people do?

In Greece, Easter Sunday is also a widely celebrated occasion. Lambs are roasted on a spit and the provision of wine is abundant. The roasted lamb is served in honor of Jesus Christ, who was sacrificed and rose again on Easter. Lamb is the most traditional Greek Easter food. Red-dyed eggs are cracked against each other and the person with the last remaining uncracked egg will have good luck. Easter Sunday is a time of festivity and people eat, chat or dance throughout the night. On the island of Crete,

many villages prepare for a bonfire effigy of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ, as described in the New Testament of the Bible. In the lead up to the bonfire event, people gather sticks and branches to prepare to burn the effigy. Around the world, many Orthodox churches, including the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, hold Easter liturgies during the Easter period according to the Julian calendar. Families unite and join in Orthodox Easter activities, festivities and traditions.

