

# Orthodox Easter Traditions

Our celebrations in Greece

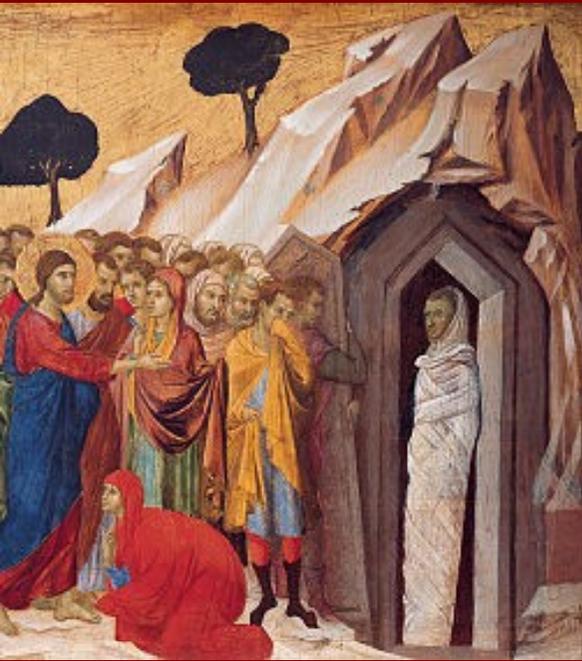
### ❖ Fasting

The week before Easter is also known as the Holy Week. During that week and 5 weeks before, people are fasting, which means that no meat, eggs or dairy products are included in their meals until Easter. After the Holy Saturday midnight function (liturgy), Christians break their fast and celebrate Easter with the “Magiritsa soup”.



### ❖ Magiritsa

It is a hot soup, cooked with vegetables, dill, lamb offal (liver) and rice. The purpose of this dish is to properly prepare the believer's stomach for the next day's consumption of meat after fasting.



### ❖ The Saturday of Lazarus

On Lazarus Saturday, which we celebrate one week before Easter, we make Lazarakia. That day is a day of victory in life over death and we consider it as the first glorious, because Jesus resurrected Lazarus. On that day, according to tradition, women knead small buns for children, which they call Lazarakia, they have the shape of a man in a swaddling shape as Lazarus pretends in the pictures, saying "Lazaro, if you do not make bread you will not be satisfied". Also on the same day we sing the carols which concern Lazarus in various variations throughout Greece.





❖ Red eggs

Also on Thursday, eggs are being boiled and dyed red. The color represents Christ's blood. After the midnight church service on Sunday, the family returns to their home and each member select an egg. Then the egg cracking begins! While they crack eggs, one person says "Christos Anesti" (= Christ has risen) and the other responds "Alithos Anesti" (=Indeed, He did). The cracking keeps going until there is only one un-cracked egg. The one with the strongest egg is said to have good luck for the whole year.





### ❖ Baking Tsoureki

On Thursday evening, just before the Holy weekend, Greeks make sweet Easter bread, called “Tsoureki”. The three braids of the bread represent the Holy Trinity. Therefore, we eat it on Easter when Sarakosti, a forty-day fast, has ended.





### ❖ The burning of Judas' "Afanos".

It is an Easter-time ritual originated in European Christian communities, where an effigy of Judas Iscariot is burned.

Other related mistreatment of Judas effigies include hanging, flogging, and exploding with fireworks. This custom now counts 26 years in the area. It is revived, every year in the main port of Hermione, on Easter Sunday night, and is always a special spectacle, for young and old, locals and tourists.

Preparations start at the beginning of Holy Week and all age groups participate with enthusiasm





### ❖ Roasting of the lamb

Lamb is the meat that is most traditionally served on Easter Sunday. Families gather very early in the morning at their yards to start a fire and roast the lamb on a spit along with “kokoretsi” (lamb organs on the skewer covered with offals), enjoying a long lunch, singing and dancing traditional Greek dances.



# Credits

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