

Greek Orthodox Easter (Pascha)

- Holy Week for the Greek Orthodox is a somber and sacred week in the liturgical calendar. Each day represents another day of Jesus' journey into Jerusalem and each day offers an opportunity for Orthodox Christians to attend church services.
- Great and Holy Friday sees a daytime service and opportunity for the children of the parish to be involved. An Epitaphio (tomb) is decorated with flowers and in the evening it is processed outside the church with the somber people of the parish following it carrying candles.
- Pascha (Easter) is celebrated at a midnight service with the church darkened on Holy Saturday evening just before midnight into Sunday. Then, a candle is lit from the altar and the flame passed to the congregation, who are all holding candles in anticipation of receiving the Light. One by one the light is given and the darkened church is now illuminated.
- Shortly thereafter the faithful sing the Hymn of the Resurrection: "Christos Anesti ... Christ is Risen" -- you may listen to it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZSyTUdpu0>
- Orthodox Easter, or Pascha, is always celebrated after Passover — this is because the Scriptures tell us that Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and there He had His meal with the disciples.
- There are years, such as in 2017, when Orthodox Easter falls on the same day as "Western Easter" — this depends on the lunar calendar and where Passover will fall
- Culturally, Orthodox Christians do not celebrate Easter in their homes with bunnies, chocolate, egg hunts or pastels
- For example, Greeks eat lamb, sweet bread (Tsoureki), and sweet cookies. Tsoureki, a sweet yeast bread made of eggs, milk, and butter, is a staple during Greek Easter. The three-strand braid symbolizes the Holy Trinity, while the red-dyed hard-boiled egg braided into the dough symbolizes the blood of Christ.
- Red eggs: eggs are dyed red with a natural process using yellow onion skins and vinegar. The red eggs represent the blood of Christ and a game is played after eating Easter dinner where everyone holds their red eggs. Each person challenges the other by cracking their eggs against the other's..... whose egg does not crack is considered having received a blessing.

