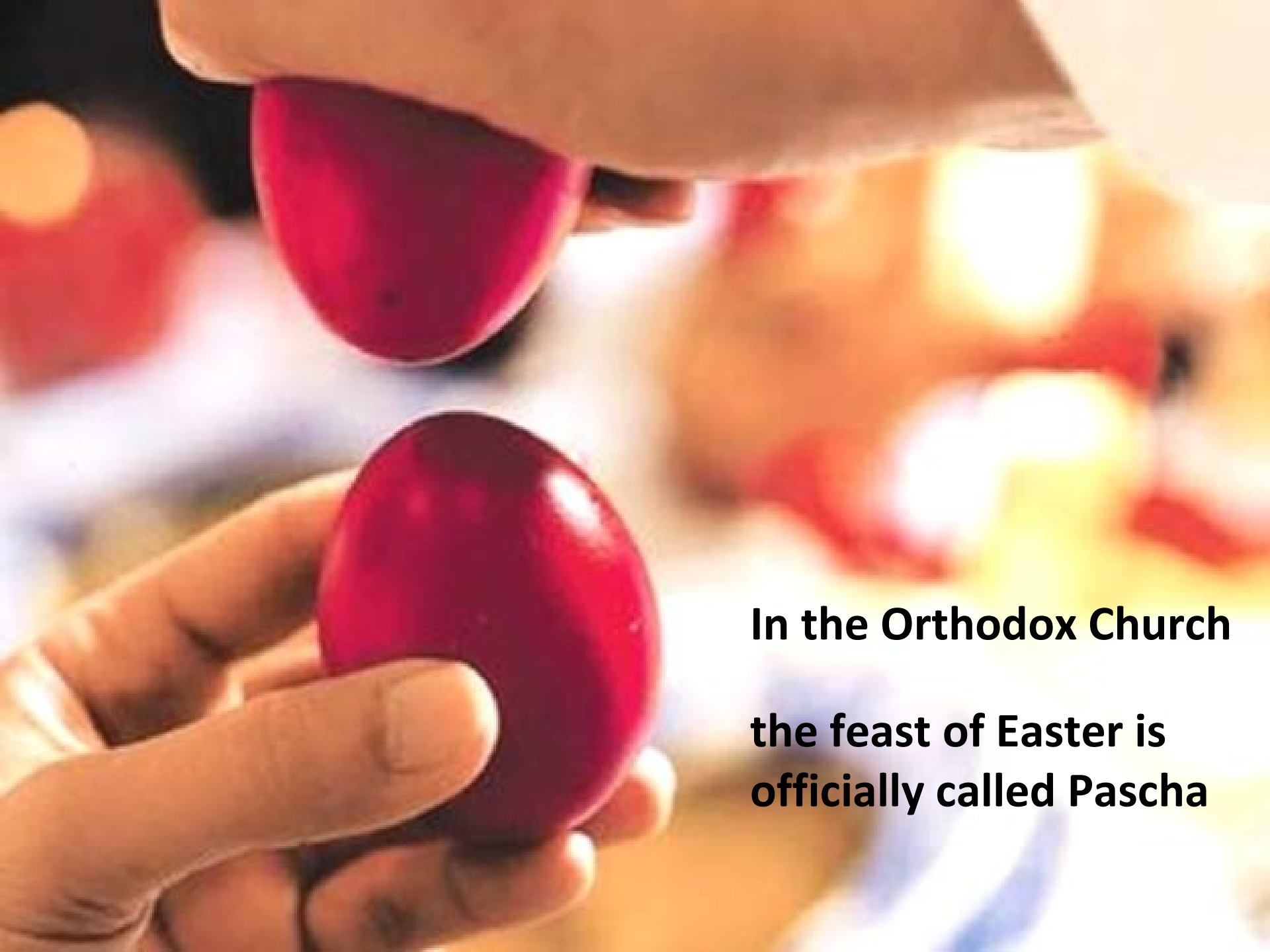


Πάσχα Ελλήνων

The Greek Easter Customs and traditions





**In the Orthodox Church
the feast of Easter is
officially called Pascha**



Hora Monastery afresco, Konstantinopolis

Easter is the most important ceremony in Greece, affecting believers and not-believers. The magical atmosphere with the candlelit churches, the scent of flowers and the Byzantine chants fills everybody with a spiritual feeling of being part of something special.

Easter (Pascha) begins on the *Saturday of Lazarus*. In Thrace and Macedonia, young women in traditional clothing called the 'Lazarines', go around the villages, singing traditional Easter songs.





People gather in church every evening throughout Holy Week, especially on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and on Holy Saturday, the night of the Resurrection.





Holy Thursday is the day that the hard-boiled eggs are dyed red, signifying the blood of Christ, and the Easter bread, called *tsoureki*, is baked.



On Thursday morning the service commemorates the Last Supper and the Betrayal of Christ.

The evening service is a long one and features twelve gospel readings.



The Crucifixion Lament

“Today He, who hung the earth upon the waters, is hung upon the cross. He, who is King of the angels, is arrayed in a crown of thorns...” is sung by the priest, while the figure of Christ on the cross is set up in the centre of the church. Dead Christ is honoured by an all night vigil in church.





Holy Friday is the most sacred day of Holy Week and is a day of mourning. At dawn girls undertake the decoration of the Bier of Christ (epitaphios) with garlands of flowers. The morning service of “Christ eposition” follows.



In the evening a funeral service is held, where Byzantine chants (encomia) are sung. The tenderness of their verses and the richness of their sound create a solemn atmosphere, which immerses everybody in the ethos and the majesty of the day.

At dusk the epitaphios is paraded through the town streets with a quite procession



In Hydra island the sea water is consecrated by dipping epitaphios in the harbour

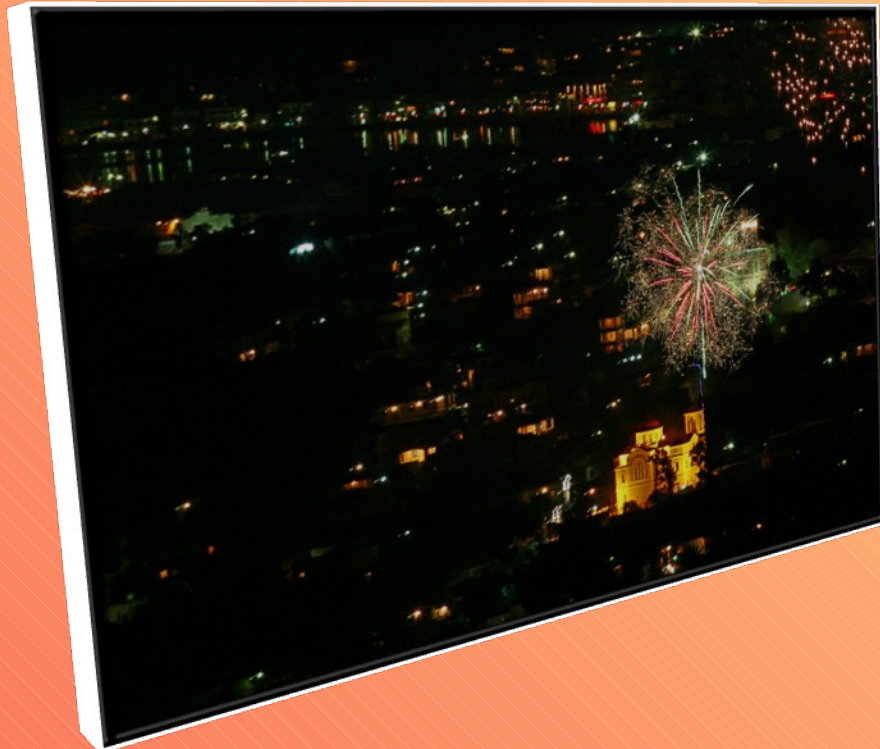
On Saturday night at 11 pm pretty much the entire country is in church. The lights are turned off at midnight and the priest announces that....





Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs granting life

Gunshots, dynamite and fireworks will be going off for the next 24 hours



People go home for the traditional bowl of *magheritsa*, a thick green soup made from the intestines of the lamb that will be roasted the next day, breaking their 49 day fast which began with the end of Apokreas.



Easter day is most people's favorite day of the year. A lamb is roasted and



friends and families get together to eat, drink, talk and dance.

CORFU

On Saturday at 11 o'clock the First Resurrection and the Pot Throwing take place. People throw pots out of windows, smashing them into the street



This noisy custom of Venetian origin, began in the town and spread to the villages.



CRETE

In Crete, as in many other places, an effigy of Judas is burnt





Happy Easter
Καλό Πάσχα

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