

## Turkey's Greek Orthodox community gathers for Agia Paraskevi festival



### **Turkish citizens of Greek origin came together with Orthodox Christians from all over the world on Bozcaada to celebrate the traditional festival**

Members of the Greeks Orthodox community gathered Friday on the Aegean island of Bozcaada, off the coast of Çanakkale, to celebrate the traditional Agia Paraskevi Festival. The locals call the festival the “Ayazma” Fair, which derives from the Greek word “agiasma” meaning holy water.

A ceremonial service was held at the historic Ayazma Monastery, which was opened to worship for a few days for the festival. The service was participated by Turkish citizens of Greek origin who live on the islands of Bozcaada and Gökçeada, as well as Orthodox Christians from Greece, the U.S., Australia, Italy, France and Canada.

Yorgi Kirilios Druganis, the metropolitan bishop of Gökçeada (Imbros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos), two Turkish islands where Turkish and Greek locals have lived for years in separate quarters, led the ceremony.

According to the legend, Paraskevi, a beautiful young girl who once lived on the island, fell in love with a handsome young man from the Ayyalus Monastery,

located today in Göztepe. After the girl's father learned about the love affair between his daughter and the man, he took Paraskevi to Ayazma and forced her to live under strict surveillance. The girl longingly looked at Göztepe all the time, wishing to send a message to her beloved via the wind, but she never made it. The legend says a wishing fountain was built after the girl died, out of empathy for the suffering of her love. The fountain, which is now located in a cave at the bottom of the monastery, is nowadays flooded by visitors lighting candles and making wishes. Turkey, home to a mixed Christian community of Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants, who trace their roots back to before the centuries-old Ottoman rule, is also regarded as the birthplace of St. Nicholas, a bishop recognized as a saint in the Orthodox world whose charitable ways inspired the modern-day image of Santa Claus.

– Source: [dailysabah.com](http://dailysabah.com)