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Romanian Port City Marks Orthodox Easter Late due to Coronavirus



CONSTANTA, Romania — Stretching the church calendar, Orthodox Easter arrived over a month late in a Romanian city on the shores of the Black Sea.

Wanting to give worshippers the opportunity to take part in what is considered to be the most important Christian celebration, Romanian Orthodox Archbishop Teodosie held an unprecedented Easter service Tuesday night that continued into the early hours of Wednesday.



This year, the service was originally supposed to have been held on April 19, but was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. The rescheduled event, which was frowned upon by the leaders of Romania's Orthodox Church, the country's dominant faith, was attended by hundreds of people.

"This heals the wounds that people had during the Easter days, when they stayed far and yearned for the church and for the light of the resurrection," Archbishop Teodosie said during the service. "We are all happy. This is how the religious service looks like in every church. Christ is risen."



The great majority of worshippers used masks to cover their faces, though Archbishop Teodosie and many of the service's other celebrants did not.

Some people traveled to the service, held outside the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, from as far away as Romanian capital Bucharest, about 225 kilometers (140 miles) to the west.

"I came from Bucharest after a hard day of work, hundreds of kilometers, and I don't regret this at all," Lidia Seceleanu said. "It's a special moment, a spiritual moment, wonderful."
The worshippers were spread around an open archaeological site outside the cathedral, which includes some ruins dating as far back as the Roman Empire.

While the service wasn't banned, leaders of Romania's Orthodox Church called Archbishop Teodosie's decision to go ahead with it "unilateral."

Easter commemorations were also held late Tuesday night by the Greek Orthodox churches in Greece and Cyprus, but those services were part of their regular liturgical calendars, not extraordinary events like the service in Constanta.



Still, the coronavirus pandemic gave them a special meaning.
It will have a greater symbolic dimension this year, because Easter was to a certain degree muted as the faithful weren’t able to participate” in the church services, said Haris Konidaris, the spokesman for the Archdiocese of Athens.

Some churches in Cyprus also held four-hour vigils to offer a “heightened sense of Easter.”
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