

## **Orthodox Greece observes Clean Monday, first day of Great Lent, much differently from all previous years**



**The faithful in Greece on Monday, the first day of Lent before Holy Pascha (Easter), known as Clean Monday or Shrove Monday in Orthodoxy, celebrated and observed the day quite differently from previous years, as pandemic-related restrictions kept churches closed in most of the country, while bans on non-essential travel outdoors limited the mass congregation of people in parks and travel to the provinces.**

Clean Monday is annually an occasion for picnics and family dinners with seafood and other traditional dishes that are allowed during the Lenten season, culminating on Holy Saturday, which this year falls on May 1. A national custom of kite-flying on the day is also widely observed.

Sadly, this year witnessed most churches and chapels without worshippers in areas where Covid-19 concentration is highest. In such regions, the Holy Services are conducted only in the presence of a few clerics, chanters and a sextant.

Where concentration of the virus is lowest, a limited number of worshipers were allowed, in tandem with the mandatory wearing of face masks and social distancing protocol in place.

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