

Greek Orthodox Easter

Easter is the most important event on the church calendar. Persons who are of the Greek Orthodox Faith will follow the Julian calendar. This means that Easter is celebrated a few weeks after some other Christian faiths and varies from year to year.

Lent: 'Clean Monday' (*Katheri Deftera*) marks the first day of Lent and many Greek Orthodox Christians will fast for 40 days. The devout will exclude all animal products from their diet and will only eat vegetable, legumes, bread, wheat and fruit. Some people may do this for the 40 days whilst other will only fast on Wednesdays and Fridays and the week leading up to Easter. During the 40 days many elderly Greek will follow the traditions of fasting, prayer and charity and in the week before Easter may want to go to confession. Throughout this Lenten period, many Greek people will restrain from unnecessary activities such as going out to concerts and parties. Weddings and christenings are generally not allowed to be held during this time as this takes away the focus of the meaning of the Easter season

is tradition that eggs are boiled and dyed the colour red on this day, as a symbol of Christ's death and resurrection. These eggs are kept in a safe place and saved for celebrations on the night of Holy Saturday/Easter Sunday.

Holy Friday: is the most solemn day of the year whereby people of the Greek Orthodox faith follow traditions of strict fasting and mourning. Icons of Christ's death are venerated and decorated with flowers, replicating Christ's tomb which is called the Epitafio (shown here). During the church service, the Epitafio is carried around the church while the congregation follows chanting and holding candles.



Picture of the Epitafio

Holy Saturday: This day is not just seen as the pinnacle of Holy week but also the highlight event of the church year. Nearly all Greeks, religious or not will attend midnight mass. Candles are lit and a special hymn is sung to glorify Christ's resurrection. After church service has ended, families will go home with their candle still lit. A special meal is eaten at home where the red dyed eggs are cracked and special lamb soup and bread is eaten.

Easter Sunday:

Traditionally this day is a day of feasting after 40 days of fasting. Usually, this is a day of celebration where Lamb is typically cooked. The day is traditionally spent with family, cracking red eggs and feasting.



Palm Sunday:

This day marks the beginning of Holy Week commemorating Christ's return to Jerusalem.

This day is celebrated by attending church service where small crosses made out of palm leaves are given out. Instructions on how to make these crosses are provided on the back of this sheet. You might want to use this activity as part of Easter celebrations within the facility for everyone to participate. You may like to use real palm leaves or paper.

Holy Week:

Holy Monday:

Day of Charity

Holy Tuesday:

Day of Forgiveness and repentance

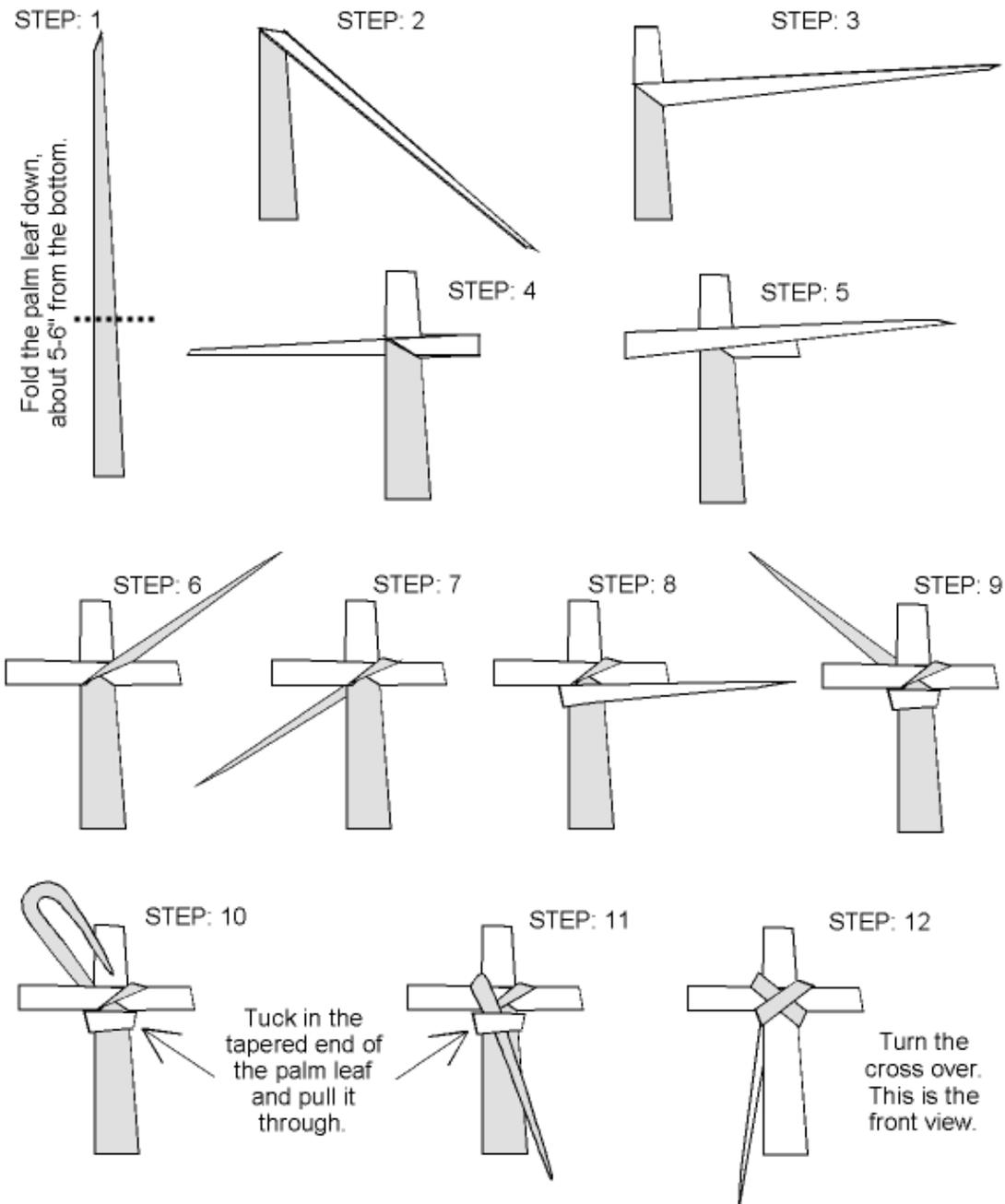
Holy Wednesday:

Day of Compassion and Mercy

Holy Thursday: Commemorates the last supper, the hours before Christ crucifixion. It

Palm Leaf Cross Directions

Supplies: One palm leaf strip about 24-26" in length, 1/2" in width, tapering to the end.



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