

Coronavirus: Greek Orthodox Church forgoes Easter Via Dolorosa procession

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By REUTERS

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A worshipper holds a cross in Jerusalem's Old City on the day that Greek Orthodox church authorities celebrate Good Friday amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Jerusalem April 17, 2020.

(photo credit: AMMAR AWAD/REUTERS)

The streets of Jerusalem's Old City were eerily quiet on Friday, after Greek Orthodox church authorities canceled the traditional [Easter](#) procession along the Via Dolorosa amid a nationwide [coronavirus](#) lockdown.

In the morning a handful of Orthodox priests - some wearing black face masks to match their distinctive vestments - arrived at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, revered in Christian tradition as the site of Jesus' burial, crucifixion and resurrection.

The clerics were granted entry to the building, and soon afterwards the sound of prayers could be heard from within.

But there was no subsequent procession down the Via Dolorosa, as in normal years, along the route that Christians believe Jesus passed on his way to crucifixion.

The Holy Sepulchre was closed to the public last month amid precautions against the coronavirus.

But small numbers of clerics have been permitted inside to celebrate the events of Holy Week. The Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox churches share custody of the building with Roman Catholics, who celebrated Easter last week. The Orthodox authorities are expected on Saturday to mark the ceremony of the Holy Fire, celebrating Jesus' resurrection. But the celebration will be very different from normal years, when the Holy Sepulchre is packed with pilgrims and worshipers.