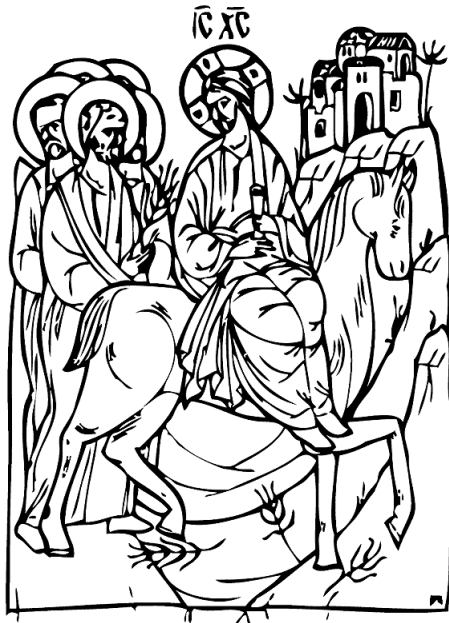


Method:

The night before baking, mix the yeast with some warm water and 1½ cups of all-purpose flour. Stir well, and set aside, covered, in a warm place. The next morning, in a bowl, sift the remaining flour. Make a well in the center and pour in the starter, sugar, honey, spices, salt, oil and water.

Knead well till the dough becomes elastic and shiny. Cover it and let it rise for 2 hours. When the dough is doubled in size, divide it in seven pieces. One of them must be larger than the others. Roll the six smaller pieces into cords.

Stick a nut in one end of each cord. Cut the larger piece of dough in 12 ropes. Stick the ends of 2 ropes near each nut and braid forming an ancient shroud. Place the breads on an oiled baking pan and cover them. Let them rise for 30 minutes to one hour. Brush the *Lazarakia* with olive oil and bake them in a preheated 350° oven for 20 - 25 minutes or until bread sounds hollow when tapped.



Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday

Visible triumphs are few in the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He preached a kingdom "not of this world." At His nativity in the flesh there was "no room at the inn." For nearly thirty years, while He grew "in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52), He lived in obscurity as "the son of Mary." When He appeared from Nazareth to begin His public ministry, one of the first to hear of Him asked: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). In the end He was crucified between two thieves and laid to rest in the tomb of another man.

Two brief days stand out as sharp exceptions to the above - days of clearly observable triumph. These days are known in the Church today as Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday. Together they form a unified liturgical cycle which serves as the passage from the forty days of Great Lent to Holy Week. They are the unique and paradoxical days before the Lord's Passion. They are days of visible, earthly triumph, of resurrectional and messianic joy in which Christ Himself is a deliberate and active participant. At the same time they are days which point beyond themselves to an ultimate victory and final kingship which Christ will attain not by raising one dead man or entering a particular city, but by His own imminent suffering, death and resurrection.



By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy Passion, Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God! Like the children with the palms of victory, we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! (Troparion of the Feast, sung on both Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday)

Lazarus Saturday: In a carefully detailed narrative the Gospel relates how Christ, six days before His own death, and with particular mindfulness of the people "standing by, that they may believe that You did send me" (John 1:42), went to His dead friend Lazarus at Bethany outside of Jerusalem. He was aware of the approaching death of Lazarus but deliberately delayed His coming, saying to His disciples at the news of His friend's death: "For your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe" (John 11:14).

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus was already dead four days. This fact is repeatedly emphasized by the Gospel narrative and the liturgical hymns of the feast. The four-day burial underscores the horrible reality of death. Man, created by God in His own image and likeness, is a spiritual-material being, a unity of soul and body. Death is destruction; it is the separation of soul and body. The soul without the body is a ghost, as one Orthodox theologian puts it, and the body without the soul is a decaying corpse. "I weep and I wail, when I think upon death, and behold our beauty, fashioned after the image of God, lying in the tomb dishonored, disfigured, bereft of form." This is a hymn of St John of Damascus sung at the Church's burial services. This "mystery" of death is the inevitable fate of man fallen from God and blinded by his own prideful pursuits.

With epic simplicity the Gospel records that, on coming to the scene of the horrible end of His friend, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). At this moment Lazarus, the friend of Christ, stands for all men, and Bethany is the mystical center of the world. Jesus wept as He saw the "very good" creation and its king, man, "made through Him" (John 1:3) to be filled with joy, life and light, now a burial ground in which man is sealed up in a tomb outside the city, removed from the fullness of life for which he was created, and decomposing in darkness, despair and death. Again as the Gospel says, the people were hesitant to open the tomb, for "by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days" (John 11:39).

When the stone was removed from the tomb, Jesus prayed to His Father and then cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come out." The icon of the feast shows the particular moment when Lazarus appears at the entrance to the tomb. He is still wrapped in his grave clothes and his friends, who are holding their noses because of the stench of his decaying body, must unwrap him. In everything stress is laid on the audible, the visible and the tangible. Christ presents the world with this observable fact: on the eve of His own suffering and death He raises a man dead four days! The people were astonished. Many immediately believed on Jesus and a great crowd began to assemble around Him as the news of the raising of Lazarus spread. The regal entry into Jerusalem followed.

Lazarus Saturday is a unique day: on a Saturday a Matins and Divine Liturgy bearing the basic marks of festal, resurrectional services, normally proper to Sundays, are celebrated. Even the baptismal hymn is sung at the Liturgy instead of Holy God: "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."

Very Rev. Paul Lazor

<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsLife.asp?FSID=19>

Lazarus Saturday Customs: This is the day when, traditionally, hermits would leave their retreats in the wilderness to return to the monastery for the Holy Week services. In many places in the Russian Church, the vestments and church hangings on this day and on Palm Sunday are green, denoting the renewal of life. In the Greek Church, it is customary on Lazarus Saturday to plait elaborate crosses out of palm leaves which will be used on Palm Sunday.

Although the forty days of Great Lent end on the day before Lazarus Saturday, the day is still observed as a fast day, with no meat or dairy products permitted. However, the fast is somewhat mitigated, and wine and oil are permitted. In Russia, it is traditional to eat caviar on Lazarus Saturday. In the Greek Church, spice breads called **Lazarakia** are made and eaten on this day.



~ Lazarakia Recipe ~

This is just one of the many recipes that you can find on-line.

You can find a few videos on YouTube on the various way to form **Lazarakia** .

Ingredients:

- 4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 package active dry yeast
- 3 cups warm water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tbs honey
- 1 tbs cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp anise
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 3 tbs olive oil
- oil for brushing
- 6 whole nuts

