

The Liturgical Seasons of the Catholic Church

EASTER

Celebration



Death could not hold Him!
Rejoice in the Resurrection.

Eastertide, or the Easter Season, begins on Easter Sunday and lasts seven weeks, ending with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the 50th day, Pentecost Sunday. It also includes the Feast of the Ascension (40 days after the Resurrection.) Although the Easter Vigil held on Easter Saturday often marks its beginning.

Easter isn't a spiritual event that happened just once, long ago; we don't say "Christ has risen" but "Christ is risen," because He rose, body and soul, and is still alive and with us today. That is the true meaning of Easter.

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

Also, once again we can use the word Alleluia praising God, that has been missing all through Lent from Church Services.





Pascha or Resurrection Sunday

Easter Sunday is a happy day for Christians because they believe that Jesus rose from the dead on this day. They believe that Jesus' resurrection or coming alive shows that death is not the end of everything. Many go to church to thank God for Jesus' life. Church bells are rung and churches are decorated with flowers such as white lilies which are associated with Easter. The colours in the church change to white or gold which are thought to be the best colours.

There are many customs associated with Easter Day which involve eggs. For this reason Easter Day used to be known as Egg Sunday. For the last two hundred years in Britain the custom of giving children chocolate eggs has been popular while in Europe and America parents hide chocolate eggs in the garden for children to find. In many countries children are given hard boiled eggs and it is also a custom for children to decorate these by painting or dyeing them in bright colours.

Eggs were always thought to be special even before Jesus was born. It is because they are associated with new life when the chick breaks from the egg. After Jesus had risen from the dead it was easy to think of eggs as a sign of new life or the empty tomb after life has come from it. So eggs have always been part of celebrations at Easter.



The Octave of Easter

The period from Easter Sunday through Divine Mercy Sunday (the Sunday after Easter Sunday) is an especially joyful time. The Catholic Church refers to these eight days (counting both Easter Sunday and Divine Mercy Sunday) as the Octave of Easter. (Octave is also sometimes used to indicate the eighth day, that is, Divine Mercy Sunday, rather than the entire eight-day period.)

Every day in the Octave of Easter is so important that it is treated as a continuation of Easter Sunday itself. For that reason, no fasting is allowed during the Octave of Easter (since fasting has always been forbidden on Sundays), and on the Friday after Easter, the normal obligation to abstain from meat on Fridays is waived.

But the Easter season doesn't end after the Octave of Easter: Because Easter is the most important feast in the Christian calendar, even more important than Christmas, the Easter season continues on for 50 days, through the Ascension of Our Lord to Pentecost Sunday, a seven full weeks after Easter Sunday! Indeed, for the purpose of fulfilling our Easter Duty (the requirement to receive Communion at least once during the Easter season), the Easter season extends a bit further, until Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost. That final week isn't counted in the regular Easter season, though.

So even after Easter Sunday has passed, and the Octave of Easter has passed, keep on celebrating and wishing your friends a happy Easter. As St. John Chrysostom reminds us in his famous Easter homily, read in Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches on Easter,

"Christ has destroyed death, and now is the "feast of faith."

