

What is the True Meaning of Easter for Catholics?



And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day”

Luke 24:46

It is the oldest Christian holiday and the most important feast of the ecclesiastical year. In fact, the dates and celebrations of the liturgical year (including all the Christian movable feasts) are arranged around the central Christian feast of Easter.

The Roman Catholic Church always marks Easter on the first Sunday that follows the first full moon of the Spring Equinox. The date therefore changes each year and falls on any day between March 22 and April 25.

Easter Sunday starts the Easter season, marks the end of Lent and is the last day of the Holy Week which is also known as the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday).

The true meaning of Easter has deep significance in our lives as Catholics.

Easter celebrates Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Christ is Risen

One practice of commemorating Easter is the joyous greeting of “Christ is risen” and a response of “He is risen indeed!” It reminds us that Jesus is alive and in our midst and he welcomes us in a new life with him.

Easter is thus a symbolic reminder for all Catholics that Jesus has overcome death and sin. It marks the victory of good over evil.

Our Faith Realized

The resurrection of Jesus is a magnificent event that shows the realization of our Christian faith. In [1 Corinthians 15:17](#), Saint Paul wrote that “unless Christ rose from the dead, our faith is in vain.” By sacrificing himself, Jesus Christ saved humanity from the shackles of sin. His eventual resurrection is a promise of a new life. It shows us that our faith in him is alive and powerful.

This event is also a powerful reminder to us all that trusting in God will pull you up even from the depths of despair.

Catholic Practices around Easter - A Timeline of Events & Symbols

Fasting and Abstinence

Prior to Easter, Catholics observe 40 days of prayer and fasting. This is a time of repentance that culminates in the Holy Week. Fasting involves reducing one's food intake, while abstinence involves refraining from certain food like meat.

One of the teachings of the Catholic Church is to perform an act of penance for our sins; and fasting is a very meaningful way to do this. It encourages self-discipline, repentance, and following Christ's example for a deeper spiritual focus.



Communion; Your Easter Duty

Can. 920 §1. After being initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, each of the faithful is obliged to receive holy communion at least once a year.

§2. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at another time during the year. - Code of Canon Law

The Sacrament of Holy Communion connects us to Christ and to our fellow Christians and the Church requires us to receive it at least once each year, in the time between Palm Sunday and Trinity Sunday, which is the Sunday after Pentecost

Easter is fundamental to Christian faith and receiving the Holy Eucharist during this season demonstrates that faith. Catholics are also urged to participate in confession before receiving the Holy Eucharist.

Easter Vigil

The Easter vigil during the night before is the most significant part of the Catholic tradition. The lengthy services include readings, music, a procession, and performing Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion) for new converts and Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults during Mass.

This represents the continuing of our faith and the fulfillment of God's promise to humanity.



Palms on Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday marks both the final day of Lent and the start of the Holy Week. It falls on the Sunday before Easter. In the Gospels, Jesus arrived to much love in Jerusalem with people throwing palms in front of him as a gesture of great respect. Palm branches symbolize peace and triumph. They are usually distributed to mass-goers so they can join in the re-enactment of Jesus' arrival. These palm fronds are blessed and worshippers don't trash them after use. In fact they sometimes weave them into little items of personal devotion like a little cross that they keep close to themselves.



Easter Eggs

Brightly painted eggs have become synonymous with Easter. But because it has been widely secularized, we sometimes forget the Resurrection symbolism of the egg.

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Traditional account speaks of Mary Magdalene as having gone to the tomb of our Saviour early with a basket of eggs to stay and mourn. She was instead the first witness of the resurrection and the eggs she carried in her basket turned a deep red color reflecting the miracle before her. Later she gained entrance to the court of the Emperor Tiberius Caesar and held an egg in her hand to announce the well known words "Christ is risen!"

The eggs are also viewed as symbols of a new beginning and resurrection. During Lent, Christians fasted and abstained from eating eggs. Hence, during Easter Sunday, the eggs symbolize joy and celebration.

Easter tradition involves children going on Easter egg hunts. They look for brightly painted hard boiled eggs hidden around the home or garden and collect them in baskets. Families also hide decorated plastic eggs filled with candy or a little money.



Easter Rabbit

The Easter Rabbit is a popular Easter icon and brings in the Easter eggs. Rabbits are pagan symbols of fertility and are also popular motifs in medieval churches. Some stories mention Easter bunnies sitting over a nest of eggs, and in other secular stories the Easter Rabbit would judge whether children have been good or bad at the start of Eastertide and like Santa Claus,

the Easter Rabbit would bring treats like colored eggs and candy even toys to children.

Easter Feast

“And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them”. Luke 24:30

There are so many different personal traditions that Catholic families follow during Easter.

Easter feast includes lamb, cakes, breads, eggs, all symbolizing the resurrection through either shape, form or the act of rising (yeast). Since it marks the end of Lent, many Easter recipes use extra eggs, meat or rich food forbidden during the fasting period. Families offer sweets and candy traditionally to break the long fast.

The season of Easter begins after Easter Sunday and lasts for seven weeks, ending with Pentecost.