

Easter Weekend Reflection: Easter Symbols

There are many symbols of Easter, some of which began as part of pagan celebrations of Spring, and others which have been commandeered by secular society. Where do we find Christianity in these symbols?

The Easter Bunny originated with an Anglo-Saxon pagan festival where the goddess Eastre was worshipped through her earthly symbol, the rabbit. The Germans brought the symbol of the Easter Bunny to America. For Christians, rabbits, which are prolific in Spring, are a symbol of abundant new life.

From the earliest times, the egg was a symbol of rebirth or the start of new life in many cultures. For the faithful, Lent was a time to abstain from eggs and dairy products like milk and cheese, so these food items were eaten during Easter celebrations. While some cultures dyed the eggs with the petals of Spring flowers, Orthodox Easter Eggs are dyed red to represent the blood of Christ and the shell of the egg symbolizes the tomb of Christ – the cracking of which symbolizes His Resurrection. While the origin of Easter eggs can be explained in symbolic terms, a legend among followers of Eastern Christianity says that Mary Magdalene was bringing cooked eggs to share with the other women at the tomb of Jesus, and the eggs in her basket miraculously turned brilliant red when she saw the Risen Christ.

A lamb is a symbol of Easter because Christians view Jesus Christ as "The Lamb of God." For our Jewish friends, the lamb of Passover was sacrificed and its blood was placed on the doorposts of the Hebrew slaves. The homes were then "passed over" by the angel of death immediately before the Exodus. Passover was a feast of freedom and promise. Early Christians saw that the Lord Himself was the Passover lamb. In the Person of Jesus, Christians experience freedom from death and the promise of eternal life.

Since the first Church Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, the cross has been the official symbol of Christianity and one that has not been commandeered by secularism. The cross – as opposed to the crucifix, which always includes the Body of Christ – is a sign of the Resurrection precisely because there is no body: Jesus Christ has transcended the cross. As you celebrate this highest of holy days, share with others the Christian perspective on these joyous symbols of the promises of Easter.

Reflection/Scripture/Activity (from Focus on the Family):

Use a rabbit picture or a stuffed bunny to teach some of the characteristics of Jesus that we should all try to have. By adding a Bible verse to each quality, you will create a true Easter Bunny!

Real Easter bunnies: are white as snow because Jesus takes all sin away (Isaiah 1:18b).

are gentle, kind-hearted and forgiving (Ephesians 4:32).

have big ears that are quick to listen (James 1:19).

have big eyes to look carefully and choose what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

have no voice for complaining or arguing (Philippians 2:13).

are quiet in prayer, but hop with thanksgiving and rejoicing (Philippians 4:4-6).

have big feet to go tell others about Jesus so they can be like Easter bunnies, too (Mt 28: 19-20).

eat what is healthy by filling up on God's word every day (Psalm 119:11).

Prayer:

Alleluia, Lord, risen, alive, and full of grace!

You paid the price that we may live in freedom today.

We worship Your Holy Name

and give thanks for your redeeming grace.

Alleluia, Heavenly Father!

May we drink in Your tender love

so that we can pour this love out to others.

Come reign in our hearts, minds and spirits.

Alleluia, Holy Spirit!

We welcome you to breathe holiness into our every word, action, and thought.

Transform us on the inside so that each day we become more like our Risen Lord.

Amen