

Dear Sacred Heart Families,

This year finds us celebrating the Church's most Solemn Holy Days in our homes. However difficult our circumstances are this time "apart" from the physical Church and her public liturgical celebrations allows us an opportunity to fortify our liturgical lives in our own "domestic churches." In addition to our private prayers and devotions (the Rosary, Divine Mercy chaplet, acts of spiritual communion, praying the Sunday Mass, etc.), we give the following suggestions to help you enter into the mysteries of Holy Week as a family. May these devotions keep us in deep communion with our priests' actions at the altar, celebrated earnestly on our behalf, during these Sacred Days.

Home Celebrations for Holy Week and Easter

Holy Thursday Meal in the Home – Remembering the Last Supper

A simple plan in remembering the Last Supper at home, including a meal, readings, and feet washing ceremony.

DIRECTIONS

There is no doubt that the most evident dimension of the Eucharist is that it is a meal. The Eucharist was born, on the evening of Holy Thursday, in the setting of the Passover meal. Being a meal is part of its very structure. "Take, eat... Then he took a cup and... gave it to them, saying: Drink from it, all of you" (Mt 26:26, 27). As such, it expresses the fellowship which God wishes to establish with us and which we ourselves must build with one another. ([Mane nobiscum Domine](#), Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II for the Year of the Eucharist, 2004-2005.)

Holy Thursday celebrates the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Eucharist was established within the Passover meal by Jesus with His Apostles. A wonderful way to bring home the richness of this feast is to imitate the Last Supper by recalling some aspects of the Passover meal and a foot washing ceremony with your family in imitation of Jesus.

This a wonderful tradition to start in one's family. If things are rushed on Holy Thursday, move the meal sometime before Holy Thursday (Wednesday night, for example) so that the whole family can participate in imitating Christ at the Last Supper.

The basic idea is serving foods reminiscent of the Passover meal as the Jews did in Egypt and Christ did in imitation of the Exodus, not in celebration of a Judaic religious ceremony. Elements of the Mass of the Lord's Supper are included to prepare us for participation at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Incorporating the various senses in this meal really helps active participation, particularly for children.

Holy Thursday is one of the biggest feasts in the Church year, since it commemorates the institution of Holy Orders and of the Holy Eucharist. Sunday-best should be worn by participants and the table should be beautifully decorated, with a white tablecloth (in imitation of the white vestments used at Mass) and even the good china and silver. For dessert (since this is a special feast day, no Lenten abstaining here), bake a cake in the shape of a lamb (there are numerous types of lamb molds available at craft stores or baking supply stores). Before or during the dinner, **Exodus 12:1-20** is read — the story of the first Passover. Then the New Testament reading about the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist is read from either **Matt 26:17:30; Mark 14:12-26 or Luke 22:7-20.**

Simple Menu Suggestions:

- **Bitter Herbs:** Cooked spinach and raw celery sticks dipped in salt water
- **Haroset:** Applesauce with cinnamon and raisins
- **Unleavened bread:** Crackers or store-bought matzohs or pita bread or homemade unleavened bread (see recipes)
- **Wine:** red wine or grape juice
- **Lamb:** Leg of lamb, or roast lamb, lamb chops, or meatloaf baked in shape of lamb (use a lamb cake mold)

The children need to be reminded that this meal is different than what the Jews celebrate because Christ already died and saved us, so we are not still awaiting a Messiah. We are not obliged to follow the directives for the Passover meal, we are merely doing it in imitation of Christ, so we can use all of our senses to know, love and serve Christ.

Before the meal, the family gathers for the **Washing of the Feet**. The initial reaction is like Peter's, "You shall never wash my feet!" (John 13:8) But today is known as Maundy Thursday because of Christ's Mandatum: He washed the feet of His disciples, explaining by saying:

Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him." (John 13:13-16).

If we remember the King of Kings, the Son of God knelt before sinful men to wash their very dirty feet (they wore sandals, and there was no carpeting or pavement in that time), how could we put ourselves up as better than the Son of God? All that is required is a bowl, a pitcher of water and a towel. The account from the **Gospel of John 13:1-17** is read and then Christ is imitated by washing the feet of the family members. It starts with the father washing the mother's feet, the mother washing the eldest child's feet and so on until the youngest child washes the father's feet. Although Christ probably had to scrub, just a little bit of water (even on just one foot) will suffice.

It is a sign of the Sacrament of penance, showing repentance and forgiveness, of rebirth in grace. This activity brings home the teaching of humility and charity when we later witness the Washing of the Feet at Mass. This should begin a discussion on how this was a little act of charity with our family members, imitating Christ. He has given the commandment to love one another as He loves us. Each of us should now make resolutions to show for others in specific actions throughout the year.

The meal is simple, joyful, and family-friendly. We do not include the scripts and prayers from the Jewish Seder meals, as that was established 1500 years ago, 500 years after Christ's death.

Activity Source: *Original Text (JGM)* by Jennifer Gregory Miller, © Copyright 2003-2020
by [Jennifer Gregory Miller](#)

Tenebrae--Candelabrum for Stations of the Cross (For Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday)

DIRECTIONS

It is hard to keep track of this treasure that is laid in Heaven if you are quite small and six weeks drag out like six years. We have made this part of the effort visible for the children so that they might see that they were accomplishing something. On or about Ash Wednesday, we dye lima beans purple to be used as counters in a jar. Beans, because they are seeds which, if put in the ground, appear to die only to spring forth with new life. This is what Our Lord said we must do if we would have life in Him. He that seems to lose his life shall gain it. The beans remind us that daily death to self in one self-denial after another is the dying which will find for us new life in Him.

"Try to surrender your will to Him, dear, so He may have His will in you." It is excruciatingly difficult, but one must begin. And they do understand, because we have discovered that as they grow a little older, they no longer need the beans — they see in their minds what they are doing.

At the same time we dye little pieces of cloth to use as purple shrouds for our pictures and statues on Passion Sunday, as the shrouds are used in church. This is remind us that with Passion Sunday, the last most solemn and sorrowful weeks of Lent have begun. One year we dyed a square of fine soft wool to make a cope for our Infant of Prague. (Instruction: You will now throw out the dye, like a good girl. Else everyone in the family will be trying to dye things in purple.)

Next, we make a candelabrum for the Stations of the Cross. For children the Stations of the Cross can conceivably mean nothing better than continual bobbings up and down with prayers. This sounds frightful, but it is true. We have somewhat the same problem teaching them to love and to know the Stations as we have with the Rosary. (See the author's *We and Our Children*, pp. 71-83.) So we decided to make a set of candles in a candelabrum to be used after the fashion of Tenebrae, the dramatic service in Holy Week, to help them love the Stations and want to say them nightly during Lent (we live too far out in the country to get to church in the evenings).

Twelve candles in one long candelabrum, or two short candelabra holding six candles apiece are needed. The candelabra may be made a number of ways. A length of board with twelve holes bored for the candles; two shoe boxes with six holes apiece for the candles, or — as we have

done — two candelabra made with plaster of paris which is poured into two empty Kleenex boxes (one at a time!), and the candles (six of each) held in place for a few moments until the plaster hardens. The box is easily pulled away when the plaster is hard. After twenty-four hours the candelabrum is dry enough to be carried to wherever you will use it. We keep ours on the mantel. We use white candles. The candelabrum may be painted black.

Together with these, we use a crucifix and a booklet of meditations suitable for children, although we do not always read these. Often they are used only to acquaint the family with each Station, letting some member supply a short meditation "out of his head." Whichever, the meditations must be kept short and if possible related to something familiar in daily life.

We light all twelve candles at the start, and put out the other lights in the room, leaving one lighted in another room so that little ones will not be frightened by complete darkness. After each Station is identified, we genuflect and say the traditional prayer:

We adore Thee O Christ, and we praise Thee,
Because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Other prayers are optional. The Stations may be properly said in a church by going from one Station to another and merely making a meditation at each. For the sake of uniformity and in order to include what to our children is synonymous with devotional "praying" we say, after the short meditation, an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Gloria. Then one of the children puts out a candle for that Station. They take turns, a different child putting out the candles every night. When we have finished the twelfth Station, Jesus Dies on the Cross, the last candle is snuffed, and the room is in complete darkness. If you were there, they would explain it to you this way: "It's because He was the Light of the World, and when He died, the Light was gone out of the world."

You start remembering — all the way back to Advent when the wreath and its weekly growing light anticipated the coming of the Light of the World; back to St. Lucy, whose feast and whose name anticipated the coming of the Light of the World; back to the Christ candle, lighted at midnight Christmas Eve to tell us that the Light had come into the world. He is our Light, our Sun, our All.

Activity Source: *Year and Our Children, The* by Mary Reed Newland, P.J. Kenedy & Sons, New York, 1956

Holy Thursday Tea/Dinner

This wonderful family evening can be found here at Shower of Roses Blog (along with many other great family ideas!)

<https://www.showerofrosesblog.com/search/label/Lenten%20Tea%3A%20Palm%20Sunday%2FHoly%20Thursday>

Good Friday – Bake Hot Cross Buns

(taken from: catholiccuisine.blogspot.com)

Hot Cross Buns – Serve with Tomato Basil Soup

Ingredients:

3/4 cup warm milk (110 degrees F)

3 tablespoons butter

1/4 cup white sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 egg

1 egg white

3 cups all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon active dry yeast

3/4 cup dried currants or raisins

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 egg yolk

2 tablespoons water

For the crosses: 1 oz. flour, a little cold water (I also added about 1/2 Tbsp of Sugar)



Directions:

Put warm milk, butter, 1/4 cup sugar, salt, egg, egg white, flour, and yeast in bread maker and start on dough program. When 5 minutes of kneading are left, add currants and cinnamon.

Leave in machine till double.

Punch down on floured surface, cover, and let rest 10 minutes.

Shape into 12 balls and place in a greased 9 x 12 inch pan. Cover and let rise in a warm place till double, about 35-40 minutes.

Mix egg yolk and 2 tablespoons water. Brush on balls.

Make the crosses for the buns: mix flour and water in a bowl to form a pastry. Roll out dough and cut into thin strips. Place these across the buns to form crosses.

Bake at 375 degrees F for 20 minutes. Remove from pan immediately and cool on wire rack.



Holy Saturday Evening / Vigil of Easter

“LUMEN CHRISTI – EASTER CANDLE

The symbols of the Easter vigil fit beautifully into our homes. The Paschal Candle, signifying Jesus' presence among us, is set in a cut-glass bowl and surrounded by fresh flowers on our dining room table. Easter holy water is added to the first water for the flowers, which are a symbol of new life. Any candle may be used for the *Lumen Christi*, but it should be as large as possible, because it will be lighted at meal times for forty days to gladden us with its lovely flame. It is a symbol which excites and instructs children. It helps families to glorify our Divine Master, who says, speaking of Himself, "I am the Light of the World."

Families who wish to fix five cloves, in place of the five blessed grains of incense, in cross form on the Paschal Candle may say this prayer from the Vigil service as they do so: (*Families may celebrate in the evening of Holy Saturday after the Sun has set*)

*By His wounds,
Holy and glorious,
May He protect us
And preserve us
Who is Christ the Lord,
Amen.*

After the prayer the magnificent *Exsultet* may be said, or Sung. The Allulua is sung and the Gospel Read. Finish the time with renewing your Baptismal Promises and making a Spiritual Communion.

Activity Source: *Family Customs: Easter to Pentecost* by Helen McLoughlin, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1956

Easter Vigil in the Home

Here are some suggestions for those who are unable to attend the Easter vigil at their parish. They can, instead, hold their own "vigil" at home, reading these prayers and blessings together as a family.

DIRECTIONS

Those at home may make the last beautiful preparations before the joy of the Risen Lord. They may be the ones to put the Paschal candle in its place, to remove the shrouds from the statues, to return the planters to the mantel where they decorate it once more with thick green, reminding us all year of the True Vine. The Infant of Prague must have on His Easter cope, and the table must be prepared for the festive Easter breakfast.

Reading the prayers of the Vigil at home, the baby-sitting ones will be ready for the return of the others. Perhaps if they have small fry to see to bed, theirs will be the privilege of telling the story that is, for me, the most beautiful of all the Easter stories. It should be the very last thing at night, after prayers, for the staying-at-home little ones. Ours have heard it as they lay in their beds.

It is about Mary Magdalene and how she found Him in the garden on Easter morning. She did not really understand. After all He had said about rising on the third day, still she wept and wrung her hands and looked for Him. Even when she saw the angels it did not dawn on her. Then — she saw Jesus. Thinking He was a gardener, she heard Him say:

"Woman, why art thou weeping? For whom art thou searching?"

And she said: "If it is thou, Sir, that hast carried Him off, tell me where thou hast put Him, and I will take Him away."

Then that lovely moment. He said simply, "Mary."

And she knew.

How tender, the love that inspired them to record this scene. We know that He appeared to His Mother first. It is an ancient tradition in the Church, and St. Teresa of Avila, many others, confirm it. But for us who are sinners, the scene described so carefully is this meeting with the one who was such a great sinner. It should be a part of every child's Easter Eve, and often it will

make them weep. But these are fine, good tears, that come because they understand that He loves them.

If the parish Vigil is early, perhaps some children will attend, or at least be permitted to stay up until their parents return. In this case, those at home could read the prayers of *Blessing for the New Fire* and the *Paschal Candle* (unless someone has successfully returned with the already blessed new fire). A new fire can be kindled at home, with a flint, by using a cigarette lighter. (I would never have known, if someone hadn't pointed it out.) Each time it is lighted, it is a *new* fire. The *Blessing for the New Fire* is a beautiful prayer.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray. O God, who through Thy Son, the corner stone, hast bestowed on the faithful the fire of Thy glory, sanctify this new fire produced from a flint for our use; and grant that by this paschal festival we may be so inflamed with heavenly desires, that with pure minds we may come to the feast of perpetual light. Through the same Christ Our Lord.

R. Amen.

(Sprinkle fire with holy water.)

We make a hole for each of the five cloves to go in the Paschal candle, by piercing the candle with a hot skewer; then we insert the cloves, light the candle with the new fire, and read the prayer for the *Blessing of the Paschal Candle*.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit. *Let us pray.* May the abundant infusion of Thy blessing descend upon this lighted Candle, we beseech Thee, almighty God: and do Thou, O invisible regenerator, look down on it, shining in the night; that not only the sacrifice that is offered this night may shine by the secret mixture of Thy light: but also into whatsoever place anything of this mystically blessed object shall be brought, there the power of Thy majesty may be present, and all the malice of satanic deceit may be driven out. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

(Sprinkle the candle with holy water.)

These blessings are out of context. Their place is in the Easter Vigil. We use them here, as we said, to inspire those at home and reflect some of the joy of the rites at the church. Used as

prayers, simple petitions made by lay priests asking God's blessing on their domestic sacramentals, they should still bring down His blessing.

The Prophecy from the Book of Jonas (3:1-10) is no longer used in the shorter form of the restored Easter Vigil, but it is an excellent reading for children left at home, especially if they have used the Jonas project described as part of their Lenten activity. The Litany of the Saints is another prayer used in the Vigil which is especially appropriate for those at home. Our children are more than ever enthusiastic about the Litany since we learned to sing it — or at least to sing the invocations to saints, followed by "Pray for us." How did we learn to sing it? A priest friend sang a few lines of it. It was that easy. Why it didn't occur to us to ask someone to sing it long ago, no one knows. If only the Trapp Family lived next door, we keep saying. But they don't, so we plod along.

If it is still early enough in the evening for the little ones to be up, the renewal of baptismal vows is a perfect ending to their vigil at home. If this is not possible, perhaps the baby-sitter would like to make this the climax of his, or her, evening, when the family returns from church, having just renewed theirs. If possible, provide blessed candles to be lighted and held by those renewing their vows.

Leader: My dearest Brethren, Holy Mother Church, recalling the death and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ, watches during this most holy night and loves Him in return; at the same time, she celebrates His glorious Resurrection, and gladly rejoices.

For the Apostle teaches us that we are indeed buried together with Christ by baptism unto death; that, as Christ is risen from the dead, so we also ought to walk in newness of life; we know that our old man has been crucified with Christ, that we may serve sin no longer. Let us reckon that we are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, my dearest Brethren, now the Lenten observance is over, let us renew the vows of our Holy Baptism, by which we have of old renounced Satan and his works, and also the world, which is the enemy of God, and promised to serve God faithfully in the holy Catholic Church.

Therefore:

Leader. Do you renounce Satan?

Response. We do renounce him.

L. And all his work?

R. We do renounce them.

L. And all his pomps?

R. We do renounce them.

L. Do you believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

R. We do believe.

L. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born and who suffered?

R. We do believe.

L. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?

R. We do believe.

L. Let us now with one voice pray God, as our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us to pray.

R. (All say the Our Father together and aloud.)

L. And may almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has caused us to be born again by water and the Holy Ghost, and granted us the remission of sins, Himself keep us by His grace in the same Christ Jesus our Lord unto eternal life.

R. Amen.

(All bless themselves with holy water.)

This form of renewal of baptismal vows may also be used, without the introductory passages referring to Lent, when children renew their baptismal vows at a family feast celebrating their Baptism or a patron saint's feast day, or the feast of Pentecost. A renewal at home at least once a year is a beautiful family rite, and the ideal way to teach children an awe and love for their Baptism.

Activity Source: *Year and Our Children, The* by Mary Reed Newland, P.J. Kenedy & Sons, New York, 1956

Victory Cross! Easter Morning.

To honor Christ's victory over sin and death, place this triumphant cross in your garden or home. Put Easter baskets and gifts underneath it.

DIRECTIONS

We began our Easter customs with a three-foot cross made of oak two-by-fours. Its crossarm is fitted to the upright by screws, so that it can be taken apart for storage. This cross is our Standard of Victory, the banner of Christ the Conqueror. With blessed candles set in holders in the arms, the cross bears a white satin ribbon marked "Alleluia XV." The numerals mean Christ Victorious.

Under the cross our children find their Easter gifts from the risen Savior, eggs scarlet in memory of His Passion, covered with gold or silver, many bearing liturgical symbols. Their chocolate candy comes in shape of a cross, and their Easter toys are lambs, reminders of Christ, the Paschal Lamb. We could not eliminate the bunny, so we used bunnies at the foot of the cross, but with a difference. The rabbit, itself defenseless, became a symbol, as our children grew older of the Christian who, being also defenseless, puts his hope of salvation in the cross. From the start we said that the risen Savior brought our Easter gifts.

The Standard of Victory we used very much as couples do who have a tree and put their baby's first gifts around it. Two years later, we added an Easter garden, which has a tomb (made from paper-mâché shaped and painted to resemble a cave or a shoe box and painted gray) with a garden and flowers, and dolls as tiny Marys, apostles and soldiers. On Easter morning the garden has all the fascination of the Christmas crib as we tell the story of the Resurrection using dolls.

How to Make

By His death on the Cross our Lord overcame our enemy and reopened the gates of heaven. To honor Christ as Victor we set up a three-foot cross in our living room as a Standard of Victory and decorate it. Our cross is made of two pieces of two-by-fours fitted together and held by screws. A ribbon of white satin in two-inch width is marked Alleluia XV (X meaning *Christ*, and V *victorious*) and draped over the crossarm. There are holes for blessed candles in the crossarm, and we light blessed candles during prayertime. We set flowers at the base of the cross.

Under it our children find their Easter presents and baskets, much as we place gifts under the tree at Christmas. The cross is used in processions and on feasts of the Holy Cross and of St. Helen.

A country family could perhaps set a cross in the garden with flowers at the base to honor the instrument of our Redemption. We will always remember the stark black wooden cross almost five feet high, decorated by dog-wood, which we have seen set up in a friend's dining room.

In honoring the cross as a Standard of Victory we can explain to the children what we do in the words of the Church who sings in her Office: "Sweet the wood, sweet the nails, sweet the burden which thou bearest: for thou alone wast worthy to bear the King and Lord of Heaven."

Activity Source: *Family Customs: Easter to Pentecost* by Helen McLoughlin, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1956

Easter Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Families should renew their baptismal vows every Easter in order to remind children of the significance of that holy day.

DIRECTIONS

Here, too, is the place to mention that the newly-blessed Easter water should be obtained from the parish church on Holy Saturday and piously used during the Easter season. And since Easter is traditionally the church's great baptismal day, if the children's baptismal candles have been received and kept, they might well be lighted and placed on the family table for the principal meal of the day. Then, too, all of the members can together renew their baptismal vows.

Activity Source: *Your Home, A Church in Miniature* by Compiled by The Family Life Bureau in the early 1950s, The Neumann Press, Long Prairie, Minnesota, 1994

Easter Symbols and Food!

DIRECTIONS



Among the popular Easter symbols, the lamb is by far the most significant of this great feast. The Easter lamb, representing Christ, with the flag of victory, may be seen in pictures and images in the homes of every central and eastern European family.

The oldest prayer for the blessing of lambs can be found in the seventh-century *sacramentary* (ritual book) of the Benedictine monastery, Bobbio in Italy. Two hundred years later Rome had adopted it, and thereafter the main feature of the Pope's Easter dinner for many centuries was roast lamb. After the tenth century, in place of the whole lamb, smaller pieces of meat were used. In some Benedictine monasteries, however, even today whole lambs are still blessed with the ancient prayers.

The ancient tradition of the Pasch lamb also inspired among the Christians the use of lamb meat as a popular food at Easter time, and at the present time it is eaten as the main meal on Easter Sunday in many parts of eastern Europe. Frequently, however, little figures of a lamb made of butter, pastry, or sugar have been substituted for the meat, forming Easter table centerpieces.

In past centuries it was considered a lucky omen to meet a lamb, especially at Easter time. It was a popular superstition that the devil, who could take the form of all other animals, was never allowed to appear in the shape of a lamb because of its religious symbolism.

The origin of the Easter egg is based on the fertility lore of the Indo-European races. To our pre-Christian ancestors it was a most startling event to see a new and live creature emerge from a seemingly dead object. The egg to them became a symbol of spring. Long ago in Persia people used to present each other with eggs at the spring equinox, which for them also marked the beginning of a new year.[58]



In Christian times the egg had bestowed upon it a religious interpretation, becoming a symbol of the rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to the new life of His Resurrection. There was in addition a very practical reason for making the egg a special sign of Easter joy since it used to be one of the foods that was forbidden in Lent. The faithful from early times painted Easter eggs in gay colors, had them blessed, ate them, and gave them to friends as Easter gifts.

The custom of using Easter eggs developed among the nations of northern Europe and Christian Asia soon after their conversion to Christianity. In countries of southern Europe, and consequently in South America, however, the tradition of Easter eggs never became popular.

The Roman ritual has a special blessing for Easter eggs:[59]

We beseech thee, O Lord,
to bestow thy benign blessing upon these eggs,
to make them a wholesome food for thy faithful,
who gratefully partake of them
in honor of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In medieval times eggs were traditionally given at Easter to all servants. It is reported that King Edward I of England (1307) had 450 eggs boiled before Easter, dyed or covered with gold leaf, which he distributed to the members of the royal household on Easter Day.

The eggs were usually given to children as Easter presents along with other gifts. This practice was so firmly rooted in Germany that the eggs were called *Dingeier* Pasch. Here is a little Austrian song of this kind:

We sing, we sing the Easter song:
God keep you healthy, sane and strong.
Sickness and storms and all other harm
Be far from folks and beast and farm.
Now give us eggs, green, blue and red;
If not, your chicks will all drop dead.

In some parts of Ireland children collect goose and duck eggs during Holy Week, offering them as presents on Easter Sunday. Two weeks previous, on Palm Sunday, they make little nests of stones, and during Holy Week collect as many eggs as possible, storing them away in these

hidden nests. On Easter Sunday, they eat them all, sharing with those who are too small to have their own collection.

The grownups, too, give eggs as presents in Ireland. The number of eggs to be given away is regulated by this ancient saying among Irish country folk:

One egg for the true gentleman;
two eggs for the gentleman;
three eggs for the churl [have-not];
four eggs for the lowest churl [tramp].

In most countries the eggs are stained in plain vegetable dye colors. Among the Chaldeans, Syrians, and Greeks, the faithful present each other with crimson eggs in honor of the blood of Christ. In parts of Germany and Austria, green eggs alone are used on Maundy Thursday, but various colors are the vogue at Easter. Some Slavic peoples make special patterns of gold and silver. In Austria artists design striking patterns by fastening ferns and tiny plants around the eggs, which show a white pattern after the eggs are boiled.



The Poles and Ukrainians decorate eggs with plain colors or simple designs and call them *krasanki*. Also a number of their eggs are made every year in a most distinctive manner with unusual ornamentation. These eggs are called *pysanki* (from *pysac*: to write, to design); each is a masterpiece of patient labor, native skill, and exquisite workmanship. Melted beeswax is applied with a stylus to the fresh white eggs, which are then dipped in successive baths of dye. After each dipping, wax is painted over the area where the preceding color is to remain. Gradually the whole complex pattern of lines and colors emerges into something fit for a jeweler's window. No two *pysanki* are identical. Although the same symbols are repeated, each egg is designed with great originality. The used most are the sun (good fortune), rooster or hen (fulfillment of wishes), stag or deer (good health), flowers (love and charity). As decorative patterns the artists use rhombic and square checkerboards, dots, wave lines, and intersecting ribbons.

The *pysanki* are mainly made by girls and women in painstaking work during the long evenings of Lent. At Easter they are first blessed by the priest and then distributed among relatives, friends, and benefactors. These special eggs are saved from year to year like symbolic heirlooms, and can be seen seasonally in Ukrainian settlements and shops in this country.

In Germany and other countries of central Europe eggs for cooking Easter foods are not broken but pierced with a needle on both ends, and the contents to be used are blown into a bowl. The empty eggshells are given to the children for various Easter games. In parts of Germany such hollow eggs are suspended from shrubs and trees during Easter Week much like a Christmas tree. The Armenians decorate empty eggs with pictures of the Risen Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and other religious designs, to give to children as Easter presents.

Easter is the season for games with eggs all over Europe. The sport of egg-pecking is practiced in many forms, in Syria, Iraq, and Iran, as well. In Norway it is called *knekke* (knock). In Germany, Austria, and France, hard-boiled eggs are rolled against each other on the lawn or down a hill; the egg that remains uncracked to the end is called the "victory egg." This game has attained national fame in America through the annual egg-rolling party on the lawn of the White House in Washington.

Here is a description by a visitor to Washington of such a contest several generations ago, when this Easter sport took place on the terraces below the Capitol, and not as in later years on the White House lawn:

At first the children sit sedately in long rows; each has brought a basket of gay-colored, hard-boiled eggs, and those on the upper terraces send them rolling to the line on the next below, and these pass on the ribbon-like-streams to other hundreds at the foot, who scramble for the hopping eggs and hurry panting to the top to start them down again. And, as the sport warms, those on the top who have rolled all the eggs they brought finally roll themselves, shrieking with laughter. Now comes a swirl of curls and ribbons and furbelows, somebody's dainty maid indifferent to bumps and grass-stains.



Over yonder a queer eight-limbed creature, yelling, gasping, laughing, all at once shakes itself apart into two slender boys racing toward the top to come down again. Another set of boys who started in a line of six with joined hands are trying to come down in somersaults without breaking the chain. On all sides the older folk stand by to watch the games of this infant Carnival which comes to an end only when the children are forced away by fatigue to the point of exhaustion, or by parental order.

No one seems to know how the custom began. The observation is also made that "when the games proved too hard a test for the grass on the Capitol terraces, Congress stopped the practice,

and the President opened the slope back of the White House." [60] In recent years, it might be added, the grass there has received the same sort of treatment as the Capitol terraces a few generations ago. The custom of egg-rolling in Washington is traced back to Sunday School picnics and parades at Easter in the years before the Civil War. At these picnics the children amused themselves with various games, and egg-rolling was one of them.

Another universal custom among children is the egg hunting in house and garden on Easter Sunday morning. In France children are told that the Easter eggs are dropped by the church bells on their return from Rome. In Germany and Austria little nests containing eggs, pastry, and candy are placed in hidden spots, and the children believe that the Easter bunny so popular in this country, too, has laid the eggs and brought the candy.

In Russia and among the Ukrainians and Poles people start their joyful Easter meals after the long Lenten fast with a blessed egg on Easter Sunday. Before sitting down to breakfast, the father solemnly distributes small pieces cut from an Easter egg to members of the family and guests, wishing them one and all a holy and happy feast. Not until they have eaten this morsel in silence, do they sit down to the first meal of the Easter season.



The Easter bunny had its origin in pre-Christian fertility lore. Hare and rabbit were the most fertile animals our forefathers knew, serving as symbols of abundant new life in the spring season. The Easter bunny has never had a religious symbolism bestowed on its festive usage, though its white meat is sometimes said to suggest purity and innocence. The Church has never performed special blessings for rabbits or hares, and neither in the liturgy nor in folklore do we find these animals linked with the spiritual meanings of the sacred season.

However, the bunny has acquired a cherished role in the celebration of Easter as the legendary producer of Easter eggs for children in many countries.

What seems to be the first mention of the Easter bunny and his eggs is a short admonition in a German book of 1572: "Do not worry if the bunny escapes you; should we miss his eggs, then we shall cook the nest." In a German book of the seventeenth century the story that the Easter bunny lays eggs and hides them in the garden, is called "an old fable."⁶¹

In many sections of Germany the Easter bunny was believed to lay red eggs on Maundy Thursday and eggs of other colors the night before Easter Sunday. The first Easter bunnies made of pastry and sugar were popular in southern Germany at the beginning of the last century. They are now a favorite delicacy for children in many lands.

Let us not forget the pig, which offers its meat as a traditional Easter dish. This animal has always been a symbol of good luck and prosperity among the Indo-Europeans. Many traces of this ancient symbolism are still alive in our time. In some German popular expressions the word "pig" is synonymous with "good luck" (*Schwein haben*). In Hungary the highest card (ace) in card games is called "pig" (*disznó*). Not too long ago it was fashionable for men to wear little figures of pigs as good luck charms on their watch chains. More recently charm bracelets for teen-agers contained dangling pigs. Savings boxes for children in the figure of a pig (piggy banks) carry out the ancient symbolism of good luck and prosperity.



It is an age-old custom, handed down from pre-Christian times, to eat the meat of this animal on festive occasions. Thus the English and Scandinavians ate boar meat and the Germans and Slavs roast pork on Christmas Day. Also, in many parts of Europe roast pork is still the traditional main dish at weddings and on major feast days. At Easter, smoked or cooked ham, as well as lamb, has been eaten by most European nations from ancient times, and is the traditional Easter dish from coast to coast in this country. Roast pork is another traditional main dish in some countries.

The nations of central and eastern Europe have other traditional Easter foods, prepared on the last days of Holy Week, blessed by the priest on Holy Saturday or Easter Sunday, and solemnly displayed on a festive table for Easter Week meals. This blessed Easter fare is called *Weihessen* (blessed food) in Germany and Austria, *Swiecone* or *Swieconka* (sanctified) among the Ukrainians and Poles. The figure of the Easter lamb, which rests on a bedding of evergreen twigs, is surrounded by colored Easter eggs. Around this centerpiece are arranged other foods in great variety and large amounts: Easter breads, meats, sausages, salads, cheese, pastry, spices, and fruit. The whole table and every dish on it are decorated with garlands and clusters of leaves, herbs, and flowers. It would be impossible to include in one small book the traditional Easter fare of every nationality. Here are a few of the better-known dishes:

The Russian Easter bread (*paska*) is made of flour, cottage cheese, sugar, raisins, eggs, and milk. It is put in a mold and shaped in firm, square pieces, about eight inches high, with a cross on each side, and the letters J. C. (Jesus Christ) imprinted in relief. In Germany and Austria the Easter bread is made with milk, eggs, and raisins, and baked in oblong loaves of twisted or braided strands (*Osterstollen*). Another kind of Austrian Easter bread is the *Osterlaib* (Easter loaf), a large, flat round loaf marked with the cross or an image of the lamb. In some parts of Ireland people eat on Easter Sunday "Golden bread" which is very similar to our French toast.

A favorite Easter pastry in Poland are the *mazurki*, originating in the province of Mazuria, which are very sweet cakes made with honey and filled with nuts and fruit. The most popular of the coffee cakes in Poland and other countries, too, is called *baba*, a provincialism for woman. The cake is always baked in a fluted pan. It resembles the skirt of a woman. *Babka*, a word commonly used for grandmother, is the same cake but in a smaller size. *Babeczka* is the diminution of the word. Small rolls or cupcakes are called *babeczki*. Here is a good recipe for Easter *baba* (*Baba Wielkanocna*):

Baba Wielkanocna

1 cup milk	1 tsp. vanilla
3 cups flour	1/4 tsp. almond flavoring
1/4 cup lukewarm milk	1 cup chopped almonds
2 yeast cakes	1 cup chopped citron, orange and lemon peel
1/2 cup plus 1 tbsp. sugar	1/2 cup melted butter
2 tsp. salt	bread crumbs
15 egg yolks	

Scald the milk. Slowly add three-quarters cup flour to hot milk and beat thoroughly. Cool. Dissolve yeast in quarter cup of milk and a tablespoon of sugar and add to cooled mixture. Beat well. Let rise until double in bulk. Add salt to eggs and beat until thick and lemon-colored. Add sugar and continue to beat. Add to sponge with flavoring and remaining flour. Knead for ten minutes. Add butter and



continue kneading for ten more minutes or until dough leaves the fingers. Add almonds and citron peels and mix well. Let rise until double in bulk. Punch down and let rise again. Punch down and put into fluted tube pan. Butter the pan, press blanched almonds around the sides and bottom. Sprinkle with fine bread crumbs. Fill with dough to cover one-third of the pan and let rise one hour. Bake 50 minutes at 350°. Sprinkle with colored sugar or baker's confetti.

Another delightful Easter delicacy are the Papal Wafers, called *Sucharki Papiesskie*:

Sucharki Papiesskie

2/3 cup butter	1 whole egg
7 egg yolks	2 cups flour
1/2 cup sugar	1 tsp. baking soda

Cream butter, add alternately one egg yolk and one tablespoon sugar and beat well. Add the whole egg. Add flour and baking soda. Mix well. Put on floured board, roll to 1/4 inch thickness and cut with round cookie cutter. Bake on well buttered baking sheet in 375° oven for 12 to 15 minutes.⁶²

An Austrian pastry is the *Weihkuchen* (blessed cake) made of flour, oil, milk, butter, and honey. The people of Transylvania bake their ham in a cover of bread dough. The Hungarian Easter meat loaf is made of chopped pork, ham, eggs, bread, and spices.

About thirty years ago breweries in Norway started to make a special Easter beer (*Paskelbrygg*), a blend of the best beers made locally. It became very popular, and today *Paskelbrygg* is a favorite addition to traditional Easter fare in Scandinavia.

Activity Source: *Easter Book, The* by Francis X. Weiser, S.J., Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1954