



# Let's talk about Easter

Palm Sunday	Maundy Thursday	Good Friday	Easter Sunday
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Easter is the oldest and the most important Christian Festival. It used to celebrate the start of Spring and "new life".

Easter is the time for holidays, festivals and a time for giving chocolate Easter eggs. But Easter means much more. It is the oldest and the most important Christian Festival, the celebration of the death and coming to life again of Jesus Christ. For Christians, the dawn of Easter Sunday with its message of new life is the high point of the year.

Usually comes in the month of April. It is what is called a 'moveable feast' because the date of it is fixed according to the moon.



It is celebrated at a different time every year but is always between 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 25<sup>th</sup> April.

Look for the first full moon after March 21<sup>st</sup>. The first Sunday after the full moon is Easter Sunday.

Children do not go to school and banks and shops are closed.

## ORIGINS OF EASTER

Like most Christian festivals, Easter has its origins in pre-Christian times. Our ancestors believed that the sun died in winter and was born anew in spring. The arrival of spring was celebrated all over the world long before the religious meaning became associated with Easter. Today, Easter celebrates the rebirth of Christ.

Different Gods were thanked for bringing the Earth back to life. The word 'EASTER' is thought to have derived from the goddess Eostre, an Anglo-Saxon Goddess and coincided with the Christian observance of Jesus' death. The name Eostre slowly changed to the modern spelling Easter.

Even though Easter is associated with Spring here in Argentina, Easter falls near the begin of autumn. However, throughout the world Easter is felt to be a time of new life and new beginnings because of Jesus' rebirth.



## ASH WEDNESDAY

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. It is a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. Ash Wednesday is six and a half weeks before Easter Day.

Ashes were used in the past as a symbol of being sorry.

## LENT

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, the day after Pancake Day and six and a half weeks before Easter Day. The last week of Lent begins with Palm Sunday, which celebrates the day Jesus entered Jerusalem and the people lay down palms at his feet. Lent lasts for 40 days and ends the day before Easter Sunday, on Holy Saturday.

The 40 days mark the 40 years of the Israelites going through the desert and the traditional 40 days of Jesus fasting in the desert.

During Lent, Christians people try to give up something like chocolate or meat. Lent is a time when Christians remember the 40 days and nights Jesus spent alone in the desert without food being tempted by the Devil. Lent is the time when Christians prepare for Easter by thinking of things they have done wrong.

## PALM SUNDAY

There are many special days associated with Easter beginning with **Palm Sunday** which begins HOLY WEEK (the week before Easter). This is the time when Christians remember the last week of Jesus' life.

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

**Maundy Thursday** is the Thursday before Easter and commemorates the Last Supper when Jesus washed the feet of his 12 disciples and he was betrayed by Judas.

## GOOD FRIDAY

**Good Friday** is the Friday before Easter Sunday and commemorates the day Jesus was crucified. This is a day of mourning in church where Christians remember the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus was arrested and was tried, in a mock trial.

Jesus was forced to carry his own cross outside the city to Skull Hill.

Jesus was nailed to the cross. Two other criminals were crucified with him, their crosses were on either side of him. A sign above Jesus read "The King of the Jews." This took place at approximately 9 a.m. Friday morning.

Christians believe that Jesus stood in our place. His death paid the penalty not for his own wrong doings but for ours.

### Good Friday Superstitions / beliefs:

- ϕ Many fishermen will not set out for catch on Good Friday.
- ϕ Bread or cakes baked on this day would not go mouldy.
- ϕ The planting of crops is not advised on this day, as an old belief says that no iron should enter the ground (i.e. spade, fork etc.).

### HOLY SATURDAY

Holy Saturday it is the Saturday before Easter, **the last day of Lent** and is the day when Jesus rested in the grave.

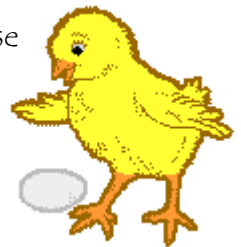
### EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Day is the high point of the festival. A day of parties, gift-giving and above all a celebration that Jesus rose from the dead and lives forever. Eggs play an important part in Easter and the traditional Easter gift is a chocolate egg.

### Easter eggs

Chocolate is the essential Easter treat.

In recent years chocolate eggs have joined the painted ones in Easter baskets, the first ones being made by hand using tin moulds about 150 years ago. These chocolate eggs were huge glossy shells which were decorated with sugar flowers and pretty ribbons and were very expensive. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mass produced eggs began to take over from the hand made ones. Early Christians used red coloured eggs to symbolize the Resurrection.



Of all the symbols associated with Easter, the egg – the symbol of fertility and new life – is the most identifiable. The customs and traditions of using eggs have been associated with Easter for centuries. Eggs have been used to represent rebirth and new life.

Originally Easter eggs were painted with bright colours to represent Spring and were used in Easter-egg rolling contests or given as gifts. After they were coloured and etched with various designs the eggs were exchanged by lovers and romantic admirers, much the same as Valentines.

Egg races, egg hunts, egg painting and egg eating have become popular ways to celebrate Easter and originate from Pagan traditions where they celebrate the coming of spring.

Today Easter eggs are usually made of chocolate. This day, children give painted eggs made by themselves to grown-ups and chocolate eggs are given to children. The eggs are either hollow or have a filling, and are usually covered with brightly coloured silver paper.

### Easter Games

#### ϕ Egg Rolling.

Eggs are rolled downhill as a symbol of the stone being rolled away from the tomb where Jesus was laid. The rules of an Easter Egg Roll are to see who can roll an egg the greatest distance or can roll their egg without breaking it, usually down a grassy hillside or slope.

Egg rolling is the most popular and it is an Easter Monday sport.. Hard-boiled eggs are rolled down a hill. Customs differ from place to place. The winner's egg may be the one that rolls the farthest, survives the most rolls, or is rolled between two pegs.

#### ϕ Hide and Seek.

On Easter morning children search for the eggs that the Easter Bunny has hidden while they were asleep. Eggs are hidden throughout the house or garden and sometimes there will be a special prize for the child finding the most eggs.

#### ϕ Egg and Spoon Race.

People have to reach the finishing line with their eggs in a spoon, without breaking it.

#### ϕ Jarping.

It is an activity which is rather like conkers. Each person holds a pace egg firmly in his hand and knocks it against his opponent's to see which is the strongest and which egg can score the most victims.



#### **Rabbits.**

Rabbits symbolized new life and rebirth in ancient Egypt. They considered it a symbol of the moon as the moon determines the date of Easter. The Easter Bunny's visit is based upon a German legend.



The legend goes that a poor woman decorated eggs for her children to find during a famine. At the moment they found them, they looked up to see a big bunny hopping away.

At Easter people also used to wear special hats. They were called bonnets. The bonnets were always new.

### **Easter cards.**

People send special Easter cards at this time. Easter cards arrived in Victorian England, when a stationer added a greeting to a drawing of a rabbit. The cards proved popular. The informal Easter Cards are sent to children, young people and to those who are not religious. They are usually funny and full of colours and pictures.



Now it is your turn. You have to pick one of the Easter games and enjoy it with your family. It would be great if you make an Easter card and keep it at home. You can show your Easter card to your classmates when we go back to school!