



SUNDAY REFLECTION

Just as the risen Jesus prepared a meal for His disciples on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias, so He feeds us in a special way, in Word and in Sacrament in this Mass. We are the members of His family, we share His interests and, above all, His mission to show God's love for all men and women throughout the world.

STEWARDSHIP: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells Peter again and again, "If you love Me, feed My sheep." He says the same to each of us, "If you love Me, use the gifts I have given you to serve your brothers and sisters."

Nicholas Murray Butler

"I divide the world in three classes:

The few who make things happen,
the many who watch things happen,
the overwhelming majority who have no notion
of what happens."

READINGS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

11 MAY '19

Acts 13:14, 43-52: We hear today about the missionary activity of Paul and Barnabas, as the Gospel spreads beyond Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

Rev. 7:9, 14-17: John gives an account of his vision of the vast crowd worshipping in the court of heaven.

Jn. 10:27-30: Jesus, the Model Shepherd, gives eternal life to His disciples, the members of His flock.

St. Augustine of Hippo

“Christ is not valued at all unless He be valued above all.”

EASTER SYMBOLS

LILIES: There are a number of legends surrounding the plant that we refer to as the Easter Lily. Tradition states that the Easter lily originated in the Garden of Eden by the teardrops of Eve that she shed while leaving the Garden of Eden. They were teardrops of repentance. According to another tradition these lilies grew in the Garden of Gethsemane after Christ's passion, springing up where Christ's bloody sweat had fallen to the ground.

For the Christian, the Easter lily is used in a positive sense and represents many things. The bulb of these flowers buried in the ground represents the tomb of Jesus and the glorious white trumpet-like fragrant flowers which grow from the bulbs symbolize His life after death. The snowy white color stands for the purity of the Divine Savior and the joy of the resurrection while the trumpet shape signifies Gabriel's trumpet call to rebirth and new life. The Easter lily is representative of Christ's resurrection, it speaks of purity and innocence, being untainted by the world. The Easter lily also represents a new season, a new birth, such as when one comes to Christ.

The lily is also a symbol of purity associated with the Virgin Mary. In the early paintings of the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel offers to Mary a branch of pure white lilies as he asks her to be the mother of Jesus. While this symbol is generally taken to indicate the purity of the Blessed Virgin, the lilies could also be a symbol of the purity, innocence, and beauty of Jesus whom she would be receiving into her womb. Mary's acceptance of the lily indicates her acceptance of Jesus. Jesus mentioned lilies in His Sermon on the Mount when He said, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet ... Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” The Easter lily is a majestic lily in the shape of a trumpet which reminds us of the triumphal resurrection of Christ. The lily also has six petals which are arranged in two sets of three, a reminder of the Trinity.

Discovered by a Swedish naturalist named Carl Peter Thunberg in 1777, modern-day lilies originate from the Ryukyu Islands of Japan. English and Bermuda horticulturists began growing their own crops of the lilies. But it wasn't until the flowers made it to flower shops in Philadelphia that the lilies began to be called Easter lilies.

Lord, grant me purity of life and restore my innocence. Grant me hope
In the Resurrection so that I may live eternally with You. Amen

Easter Bunny: Probably should address the bunny that is commonly associated with Easter. While you're biting the heads off your chocolate bunnies this weekend, you might wonder how rabbits became so central to our Easter celebrations. It's tempting to assume that because there's no biblical basis for the Easter Bunny, rabbits and hares have no religious significance – but that's just not the case.

Leviticus 11:6 states that the hare is an unclean animal: "The hare, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you", but in Christian art, it is regularly associated with rebirth and resurrection.

In fact, the symbol of a circle of three hares joined by their ears has been found in a number of churches in Devon. Like much of our cultural "bunny" symbolism, the meaning of this image remains mysterious – and The Three Hares Project has been set up to research and document occurrences of the ancient symbol, examples of which have been found as far away as China. Rabbits and hares have also been associated with Mary, mother of Jesus, for centuries. Their association with virgin birth comes from the fact that hares – often conflated mistakenly with rabbits – are able to produce a second litter of offspring while still pregnant with the first.



Detail of the Three Hares Stone (Dreihasenstein) in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. (CC 1.0)

Virginity or fertility?

Titian's painting [The Madonna of the Rabbit](#) depicts this relationship. Mary holds the rabbit in the foreground, signifying both her virginity and fertility. The rabbit is white to convey her purity and innocence.



The Madonna of the Rabbit by Titian, 1530 ([public domain](#))

Ye olde Saxon mythe

Indeed, some folklorists have suggested that the Easter Bunny derives from an ancient Anglo-Saxon myth, concerning the fertility goddess Ostara. The Encyclopedia Mythica explains that: *Ostara is the personification of the rising sun. In that capacity she is associated with the spring and is considered a fertility goddess. She is the friend of all children and to amuse them she changed her pet bird into a rabbit. This rabbit brought forth brightly coloured eggs, which the Greek goddess gave to children as gifts. From her name and rites the festival of Easter is derived.*

Indeed, in his 1835 book *Deutsche Mythologie*, Jacob Grimm states that “the Easter Hare is unintelligible to me, but probably the hare was the sacred animal of Ostara ... Ostara, Eástre seems therefore to have been the divinity of the radiant dawn, of upspringing light, a spectacle that brings joy and blessing, whose meaning could be easily adapted by the resurrection-day of the Christian’s God.”

Nuremberg Chronicle’s depiction of the Venerable Bede. [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The myth of Ostara, then, has become a popular theory for the derivation of the Easter Bunny – although it is a contested one. Either way, it seems that the association between the Easter Bunny and Ostara began with the 8th-century scholar the Venerable Bede in his work *The Reckoning of Time*. Bede said that our word “Easter” stems from “Eostre” (another version of the name “Ostara”). There is, however, no other historical evidence to support his statement.

Modern bunnies

The earliest reference to an egg-toting Easter Bunny can be found in a late 16th-century German text (1572). “Do not worry if the Easter Bunny escapes you; should we miss his eggs, we will cook the nest,” the text reads. A century later, a German text once again mentions the Easter Bunny, describing it as an “old fable”, and suggesting that the story had been around for a while before the book was written.

In the 18th century, German immigrants took the custom of the Easter Bunny with them to the United States and, by the end of the 19th century, sweet shops in the eastern states were selling rabbit-shaped candies, prototypes of the chocolate bunnies we have today. So whether bunnies are unclean, symbols of prolific sexual activity, or icons of virginity, the enigmatic Easter Bunny looks likely to remain a central part of Easter celebrations – recently, one was even involved in a surreal mass brawl in a New Jersey shopping centre. Just where they came from, however, will probably have to remain a mystery. At least for now.

FIRST COMMUNION SIGNIFICANCE

I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread that came down from heaven; not like the bread that your ancestors ate; they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:48-58).

The mystery that these lines brings to us is the mystery of life. At Christmas time we all feel warm and cuddly that there is a Baby Jesus in the Manger. We love Christmas so much because it is so easy to take. It is easy to hug and kiss a new baby. As we travel down the road of the calendar, we hear the story of the Circumcision. The first blood that Jesus shed for us. We go a little bit further and we see Him staying behind from His parents and hanging around in the Temple with the Rabbis.

The event ends well because Joseph and Mary find Him, but we hear her ask, "Don't you know that your father and I been worried about you?" The twelve year old answers back, "Don't you know that I have to be about my Father's work?" He then leaves quietly in their company, goes home to Nazareth where He grew in stature, age and wisdom and was every obedient unto them."

A little later we will hear the story of the wedding at Cana when Mary will once again assert herself and say, "They have run out of wine." He says, "Woman, what is that between you and me?" She has the last word, she tells the servants, "Do everything at He tells you." We then follow Jesus down the road to His passion, death and resurrection.

First Communion opens the door of our understanding of the mystery of Jesus in our lives. We receive First Communion at a time in our lives when we really start to know the difference between right and wrong. We receive First Communion at a time in our lives when we are ready to approach the adults' table at the party, the Eucharistic Banquet. We receive First Communion because we have come to learn that the Bread and the Wine have become the Body and Blood of Jesus.

We have come to know that when we eat of His Flesh and drink of His Blood that we become more Him every time we do it. We have come to know that this is our period of growing into having a life of honor and respect among the faithful who believe in Him. Yes, this is a big stage of the beginning. It is our responsibility to continue growing in the honor and respect that we found on the day of our First Communion.

EASTER:

Most people think of Easter as a single day. It's never had the commercial appeal of Christmas, and because it always falls on Sunday, most people don't get an additional day off from work. But for Catholics, Easter isn't just a day, it's a whole season. The Easter season stretches all the way to the feast of Pentecost. Lent, which sometimes feels like it's stretching on forever, is actually forty days long. Easter, on the other hand, is all of fifty days long. About these fifty days theologian Nathan Mitchell writes:

"The great fifty days of Pentecost are not an unwelcome, unrealistic obligation to 'party on,' even if we don't feel like it, but an invitation to explore more deeply 'the weather of the heart,' to awaken our memory of God's presence and power in our lives, to look more closely at all the rich and varied textures of creation."

One way the church pursues this goal of seeing God present in the world is through the reading of the Acts of the Apostles. At Masses all through the Easter season, our usual practice of reading from the Old Testament is replaced by reading from the Acts of the Apostles. These readings tell the story of the church's earliest days, and the beginnings of our faith's spreading throughout the ancient world. These stories of heroism, controversies, persecutions and miracles all testify to the continued presence of the Risen Christ in the world, through the lives of his disciples, and the actions of the Holy Spirit.

All of this should be an encouragement and a sign of hope for us today. Despite war, violence, personal struggles, and an under-performing economy, God has not abandoned us, nor left us to our own devices. The risen savior is still with us. These 50 days of Easter ask us to reflect on the ministry of Jesus Christ and especially on the salvation that He has earned for us through His passion, death on the Cross, His obedience to the Father, and His Resurrection from the tomb, and to live this reality in our own lives. The reality that through our baptisms we are called to share in Christ's death and resurrection and to truly be an Easter People recognizing His continuing presence with us in Word and Sacrament.

Easter is not a day but a season of 50 days. The octave, which we completed a week ago, eight days of high celebration began on Easter Sunday. This is followed by 42 more days of rejoicing concluding on Pentecost.

In my first assignment in Wytheville at St. Mary, Mother of God parish I heard a lot of comments about the fact that we Catholics did not permit Jesus to come off the cross. Above the main door into the church was a carving of the crucifixion which really riled up some of the population out there. The comments remind me of reading about a discussion between a Catholic and an Evangelical neighbor. According to the Evangelical; "We," boasted the Evangelical, "don't display the cross with Christ still hanging from it like you Catholics do. It seems that you, with your season of Lent, just want to dwell on Christ's passion. We are Easter people – we focus on His resurrection."

LENTEN PENANCE & EASTER JOY

Of course, the fact that we revere the crucifix doesn't mean we Catholics don't believe that He also rose from the dead! But I have to admit, the way we observe Lent versus the way we celebrate Easter often feeds into the misconception contained in these remarks.

Ash Wednesday arrives and our Churches are packed. It is not even a holy day of obligation,

and people show up who are seldom seen on Sundays. The ranks of those attending daily Mass swell. There are Stations of the Cross, Lenten missions, parish fish fries. Forty days worth of spiritual exercises, penance, and focus on our Lord's suffering.

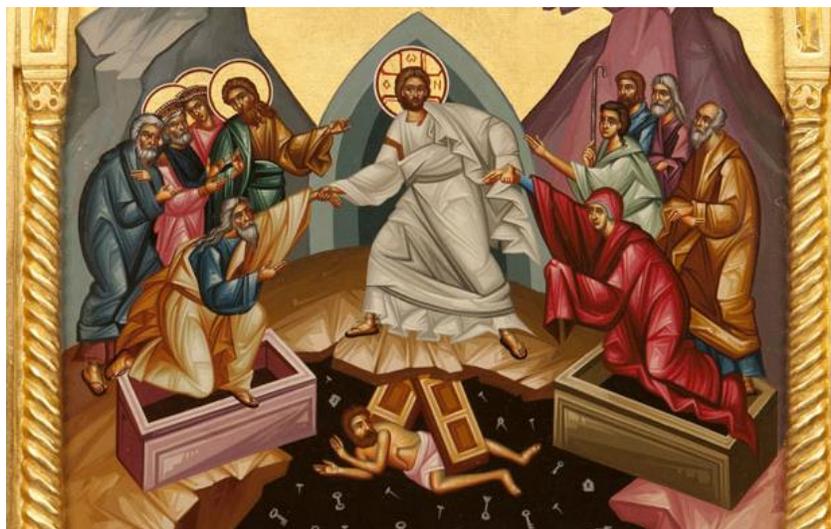
Then Easter Sunday rolls around. Bonnets, chocolate, and bunnies, jelly beans and those god-awful marshmallow peeps, appear. Next day and definitely the next Sunday, churches are virtually empty and everyone returns to business as usual. The candy is almost gone except for the black jelly beans and the chocolate rabbits are earless. Maybe a few hard-boiled eggs remain, unless you grew up in my home where they were made into egg-salad.

EASTER A SEASON, NOT JUST A DAY!

This is not the way things went in the Early Church! Lent may be 40 days. But Easter, from at least the early 4th century, went a full **50 days**—from Easter Sunday through Pentecost. The first ecumenical council of Nicaea, the one that gave us the Creed we recite every Sunday, issued a liturgical decree that is still observed till this day in some Byzantine Catholic and Orthodox Churches. As a sign of rejoicing, the Council prohibited any kneeling in the liturgy until the end of the Pentecost celebration. (Just a note this is no longer the practice in the Western Church, the Latin Rite. We should not run out endorsing this ancient practice merely because it justifies some misapplied notions attributed to the "Spirit of Vatican II". The practice of kneeling is a long standing practice of the Western Catholic tradition, it is a sign of adoration, not just penance as in the East.) But we do need to recover the richness of Easter as a season, not just a day.

THE EASTER OCTAVE

First of all, let's recover the idea of the Octave. In the book of Exodus, God commanded the Israelites to celebrate the greater feasts like Passover for eight days, with a solemn assembly on the first and the 8th day. So liturgically, we celebrate Easter at highest pitch from Easter Sunday to Divine Mercy Sunday. Each and every day of this Octave is considered a solemn feast (aka a solemnity) in the Roman calendar. If there is any time to go to daily Mass, the Easter Octave is it! And though the choir leader's contract may not include leading Music during Easter octave Masses, surely the priest or one of the congregation can lead the acclamations and a few songs to make even an early morning Mass share in the festive spirit of the week.



A FEW PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR EASTERTIDE

To set off the whole Easter Season, you may consider at the breakfast and dinner table before saying grace, employ the Easter greeting used in the Eastern churches. One individual would say "Christ is Risen" and the family responds "He is truly Risen!".

Or perhaps explore the use of some of the prayers specific to the Easter Season. The beautiful Marian prayer, *Regina Caeli* (Queen of Heaven Rejoice Alleluia

The atheist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said, "If you Christians want me to believe in your Redeemer, you need to look more redeemed!"

The recovery of Easter joy is one of the keys not only to our own happiness, but to the new evangelization. A glum, somber Christianity will attract few disciples.

ICON AT THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH

MARY MAGDALENE ANNOUNCES THE RESURRECTION

The origins of this image are found in Sacred Scripture. "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?' supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him. 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to Me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that He had said these things to her. (Jn. 20:15-18)

Theology & Symbolism

"I have seen the Lord!" Mary Magdalene stands facing the eleven apostles, earnestly trying to communicate the wonderful news that Jesus is alive! Their faces reflect a mixture of puzzlement and skepticism, sadness and hopelessness, having themselves only just experienced the arrest, crucifixion, and burial of their beloved Lord. A fanciful representation of the city of Jerusalem forms the background, with a rainbow providing a symbol of the Resurrection. The only apostle traditionally identified in scenes such as this is Peter, the figure in a blue robe nearest Mary. Each person is depicted with elongated bodies in a style made famous by Dionysius, a Russian iconographer from the 14th cent. The ratio of the height of the figures to the height of their heads is about nine, compared to the normal human proportion of seven. This is done in certain icons to emphasize the importance of the saints depicted. Each apostle and Mary Magdalene have halos of gold leaf surrounding their heads. This ancient symbol of sanctity is meant to symbolize the Divine light of God shining forth through the work of this holy woman and these holy men.

PASTOR'S UP-COMING SCHEDULE

Saturday 4 May Vigil Mass of Third Sunday of Easter 5:00 p.m.
First Communions

Sunday 5 May Masses Third Sunday of Easter
7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m. First Communions
Brig 7:30 p.m.

Monday 6 May Pastor's Day off
Mass 8:30 a.m.
Meeting with Company Rep
Meeting with parishioner Funeral prep
Brig 7:40 p.m.

Tuesday 7 May Mass 8:30 a.m.
Visitation and Wake Service Rosalie LaRosa 6-9 at the church
Will remain in the church during the night. You are invited to spend
some time during the night in vigil

Wednesday 8 May Mass 6:30 a.m.
Confessions
Mass 8:30 a.m.
Funeral Mass Rosalie LaRosa
Mass Indian Creek Correctional Facility 6:00 p.m.

Thursday 9 May Mass 8:30 a.m.
Confessions 5:00 -6:30 p.m.
Mass 6:30 p.m.

Friday 10 May Mass 8:30 a.m.
Meeting 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Quiet Adoration & Reflection 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday 11 May Mass 8:30 a.m.
Confessions 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Vigil Mass 4th Sun of Easter 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 12 May 4th Sunday of Easter
Masses 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m.
Brig Mass 7:00 p.m.

Monday 13 May Funeral Mass,& Reception Sophie Norton 11:00 a.m.
Burial A.E. Horton 3:00 p.m.

