



# CHRISTIAN FORMATION

## EASTER RESOURCES

### *The Season of Easter*

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

We now enter the white time of year - white for joy and celebration. The alleluias return, the flowers return, the joyful music and the glorious stories of the Resurrection appear in our liturgies.

The Great Fifty Days begin on Easter Sunday and end with the Day of Pentecost. The Church has observed this season longer than any other liturgical season. During this time, the Paschal Candle remains at the altar, reminding us of Jesus the Light of the World.

It is important to keep the season even if the Easter lilies have wilted and some of the hymns have lost their relevance (it is hard to sing Jesus Christ is Risen Today three weeks into the Easter season) by preaching on the Paschal Candle, choosing hymns from the vast array of choices that do not specifically mention “today”, preaching and teaching on the wonderful lessons and the constant recalling and celebrating that we are Easter people - people of the Resurrection.

The word “Easter” comes from a Teutonic word “eostre”, the name for the goddess of growing things. Easter also coincides with the Jewish Festival of Weeks, which begins at Passover and ended after 50 days on the Festival of Pentecost. It was both a feast to celebrate the harvest and also the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

During the Great Fifty Days we will read a portion of the Acts of the Apostles rather than an Old Testament reading. The Gospel readings will feature Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to his disciples. From doubting Thomas, to the people on the road to Emmaus, to the fishermen on the beach, Jesus’ comforting words to his disciples and the story of the Good Shepherd.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

# *Easter at Home*

## **Plant an Easter Garden**

How about an Easter Garden? Designate a spot that can be seen from inside your home for the garden. Purchase some flowering plants and arrange them around a small pot, turned on its side with a saucer leaning against the side to represent the open tomb. You might enjoy reading and then acting out the special Easter stories of Thomas, breakfast on the beach with Jesus, the three women at the tomb on Easter day.

## **Easter Eggs**

Everyone loves Easter eggs. Their place in the Easter traditions around the world is an interesting bit of information.

Many eggs are very elaborately painted and decorated with Christian symbols. Some are done very simply using onion skins, roots, walnut shells or coffee to dye the eggs.

Ukrainian women have for generations made beautiful pysanka eggs at Easter. Work begins on these creations many weeks before Easter. Using a batik-like process, wax is applied to the egg in a pattern and then the egg is dipped in dye. After drying the process is repeated until the entire egg is covered with beautiful symbols. To learn more, please check out these websites.

[www.learnpysanky.com/](http://www.learnpysanky.com/) [pysanka egg websitemembers.aol.com/nonstopny/easter/ pysanky.htm](http://pysanka.eggwebsitemembers.aol.com/nonstopny/easter/pysanky.htm)

[www.todeirdre.com/pages/Pysanky/ PysankyMain.html](http://www.todeirdre.com/pages/Pysanky/PysankyMain.html)

## **A Holy Week Easter Basket**

You might like to do a Holy Week Easter basket. Using 8 plastic eggs of different colors, paint with paint pens or markers a symbol for each day. Some suggestions would be a palm branch, a nail, lily, cross, chalice, heart with cross, paschal candle, crown of thorns. Inside each egg, place an object and a scripture verse on a slip of paper. The objects could include a nail, Easter stickers of various patterns, a chocolate egg, a birthday candle, a plastic grape, a piece of wheat, a small silk lily, a palm branch piece. Each day the egg for that particular day is opened, the scripture read and the object placed on a cloth to be viewed during family worship for the week.

## **Non-perishable Easter Eggs**

Ceramic eggs can be purchased from craft stores. Paint with diluted house paint and then decorate with paint pens or markers. Children could make these eggs for shut-ins or for the whole congregation to pick up from a large basket on Easter day. This activity could be a meditative activity as well with some quiet discussion about various symbols that could be painted on the eggs.

## **Easter Sunday Table Prayer**

Creative God and Lord of Life,

You who call forth from the darkness of death all those who love you, we rejoice on this Easter Sunday in the resurrection from the dead of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Visit our home and this table with your bright blessing of peace and life.

We pause in the midst of this prayer to remember all the holy dead of our family who live now in you and who await the final and glorious resurrection from the dead.

May they and we, because of our faith in you, our God, taste in the victory of life over death.

May the risen Christ, our Lord and Savior be our guest as we celebrate his resurrection with this Easter Sunday dinner.

Bless those whose work to prepare this meal has truly been a work of prayer, and bless all of us who shall share it with Easter love and joy.

May you, then, bless this table and this food, and each of us in your holy name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

*(Taken from Prayers for the Domestic Church, Edward Hays)*

## *Easter at Church*

During the Great Fifty Days, the church celebrates Jesus' resurrection. We begin with the story of the Marys at the tomb and then Jesus' appearance to the disciples, to Thomas, to the people on the road to Emmaus, to the disciples on the beach.

Our liturgy reflects the joyous season - the alleluias are back, our music is joyful and we hear the stories of Jesus' appearance to his disciples and the work of the early church as they lived into Jesus' resurrection. It is customary to not say the confession during these fifty days and it is also the custom to stand rather than kneel. This is a time in our church year to remember our baptisms and the mission of the church.

The color for the season is white or festive array and the Paschal Candle remains lit in a place of prominence during this time.

### **Don't Forget the Alleluias!**

If you buried the Alleluias the last Sunday of Epiphany, don't forget to "unbury them."

## *Ascension Day*

Forty days after Easter, the church celebrates the Day of Ascension, that day when we remember Jesus' return to heaven. Because this day falls on a Thursday, we often do not celebrate this day, and it is often forgotten in our worship.

Ascension is an important day for the church because it celebrates the completion of Jesus' earthly ministry and his presence at the right hand of God, where through his humanity we also have a share in the divine life.

Some of the best hymns in the Hymnal 1982 celebrate Ascension. You can read the accounts of the ascension of Jesus in Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50-53, and in Acts 1:9-11.

The color for Ascension is white for festival and joy and the crown is an oft-used symbol for the reign of Jesus.

## *Rogation Celebrations*

Rogation Days are celebrated on the three days before Ascension. The word rogation comes from the Latin word "rogare" which means to ask. These rogation days are set aside by the church for prayers asking God's blessing on the crops. In early days, these prayers were said while processing around the field or garden. In places where the sea provided jobs for the people, boats were blessed and prayers for a good fishing season were given.

You might like to arrange visits to parishioners' gardens or farms (or fishing boats) during this time for prayers. End the time together with a meal or snack and time to visit. You might have a meal or snack with a theme - vegetables and dip for a garden, a fish fry, crab boil or shrimp for the boats, whatever suits your place and time. You might also end your celebration at the church with refreshments and the opportunity to plant a flower garden at the church for all to enjoy during the summer months.

# *The Great Vigil*

If your church observes the Great Vigil, you have a marvelous opportunity to participate in an ancient liturgy of the church. It is also a most wonderful service for children. It has all the necessary elements, intrigue, darkness, candles, good stories, music, drama!

The service consists of four parts: the service of light, the service of lessons, the renewal of Baptismal vows and the Holy Eucharist.

The service takes place the night before Easter, or before dawn on Easter day. It begins in darkness. The service begins with the chanting of the Exsultet, an ancient hymn of the church; the Paschal Candle is brought into the dark church. As the candle passes down the aisle, people light their small candles from it. The effect of going to light from darkness is a powerful effect.

A Paschal Candle can be purchased from a religious supply house, or the congregation can make their own. A large plain white candle can be purchased from a religious supply house and sheets of colored wax can be purchased from craft shops. You might like to have a time before the service when people could decorate the candle. Traditionally, the year is placed on the candle. The Greek letters for Alpha and Omega can be placed above and below the date. Lambs, lilies, vines, grapes, bread and other symbols for Christ can be fashioned from the sheets of wax and then affixed to the candle. The Candle sits near the altar during the Great Fifty Days. After Pentecost, it is removed from the chancel area and is brought out for funerals and baptisms.

The selection of wonderful stories in the Vigil can be found on pages 288-291 in the Book of Common Prayer. After each lesson, a psalm, canticle or hymn may be sung. It might be interesting to have dramatic readings of the stories, along with sound effects, dance, or re-enactments of the stories.

Imagine how differently you would hear the story of Ezekiel's valley of the dry bones if people were shaking rattles, or dancing with scarves to celebrate with Miriam the crossing of the Red Sea.

The third part of the service is the renewal of Baptismal Vows, and/or baptisms. In the early church, the season of Lent was a time for people to be instructed in the teachings of the Church and to prepare for baptism at Easter. The new Christians would come to the Easter Vigil and then be baptized and then celebrate the Eucharist for the first time.

The final part of the service is the Holy Eucharist. The candles on the altar might now be lighted from the Paschal Candle. At the singing of the Gloria, the bells that all participants brought are rung. If your church has the tradition of flowering the cross, you might have children bring flowers to the altar area to the cross during the offertory. Do educate your congregation to the fact that this is an offering and not a performance. The lights are all on, the beautiful flowers, the joyous music and the celebration of the Eucharist remind us that we are indeed Easter people.

You might like to conclude the evening with a special reception with a variety of Easter breads or other ethnic Easter foods.

## Library Resources

The Diocesan Resource Library has a number of Easter Resources to assist you in your programming needs for this season. To access a catalogue listing, please go to [www.epicenter.org](http://www.epicenter.org) and click on Christian Formation and then on Library Catalogue and enter keyword "Easter". You might try various combinations of "Easter resources", "Easter curriculum", etc. to obtain the most listings. We are happy to assist you in any way and also happy to mail resources to you. Please be mindful of the 2 week check out period and let us know if you wish to keep resources longer than that.

*Welcome to the Church Year*, Vicki K. Black  
*Petook, an Easter Story*, Caryll Houselander  
*Lilies, Rabbits, and Painted Eggs*, Edna Barth  
*He is Risen, The Easter Story*, Elizabeth Winthrop  
*The Mystery of Easter*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
*To Dance with God*, Gertrud Mueller Nelson  
*A Book of Feasts and Seasons*, Joanna Bogle  
*The Tale of Three Trees*, Hunt/Jonke  
*Rechenka's Eggs*, Patricia Polacco

*Ethics after Easter*, Stephen Holmgren  
*Fifty Ways for the Fifty Days: Creative Education*  
*Activities for Easter through Pentecost*,  
Phyllis Vos Wezeman  
*Chicken Sunday*, Patricia Polacco  
*Hallelujah: the Bible and Handel's Messiah*  
(Kerygma Curriculum), Carol Bechtel Reynolds  
*The Easter Story*, Brian Wildsmith  
*Risen with Christ*, Gretchen Pritchard

## Other Easter Resources

Beulah Enterprises has a variety of resources that are excellent for the Easter season. The Easter puzzles are three different puzzles that enable children to work on their own or with others to assemble the puzzle and think about the stories. To see other resources available go to [www.beulahenterprises.org](http://www.beulahenterprises.org).

CHRISTIAN FORMATION EASTER RESOURCES

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