

Ascension

One celebration. Throughout the Easter season, we praise God our Father for making Jesus Lord of creation and seating him at his right hand. Forty days after the resurrection (cf. *Acts* 1.3) or on the Sunday following the fortieth day, we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord, who has led the way through death to God.

Seated in glory. Jesus our King is seated at the right hand of his Father. He offers the praise and prayers of the Church in heaven and on earth to our Father. Our songs of praise are joined with his, and he offers us along with his own total self-giving to God.

Days of prayer. We celebrate the glory of our Lord and to pray for his people on earth. In the days between the Ascension and Pentecost, we ask Jesus to send his Spirit on his Church, in order to renew his generous gifts and to call his people to be ever more faithful to his commandment of love. These days are the original novena.

Pentecost

Sending of the Spirit: On this final day of the Easter season, we rejoice in being members of God's holy people, with the privilege and responsibility of joining Christ and his Church in worshipping God. We thank the Father for letting his Spirit live within us to guide our lives and our prayer. The Spirit is Jesus' first gift to all who believe.

End of the season: On Pentecost evening the season ends. The Easter candle is placed in the baptistry. During the year, it will be lighted whenever we celebrate baptisms or funerals: when new members are welcomed into the Church of God and when members follow Jesus back to God.

Baptism and Eucharist: The Easter season is an invitation to live out the meaning of our baptism. Do we continue to resist sin and live for God? Are we active members of our community of faith, or do we just surface on Sundays... or even more rarely? Is the Sunday Mass at the centre of our living all week?

Are we Easter people?

Living the rest of the year: During Lent and Easter, God has renewed his people. He has called us back from sin and death; he invites us to remain close to Jesus. We are to let the teachings of Jesus – his love for others, his readiness to serve, his strong stand for what is pleasing to God – become an important part in our life. The Lord Jesus is always with us to help us. *Alleluia!*

*Lord Jesus, our brother,
we love you.
Help us to love you more.*

*Have mercy on all your people
who have been baptized in your name.
Stir up your Spirit in our hearts,
and teach us to keep your commandments,
to carry our daily cross with you,
and to see you in all we meet.*

*Lord Jesus,
help us to be your Easter people today.
Amen!*

*Holy Mary,
pray for the people of God. Amen!*

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EASTER SEASON

The Lord is risen, *alleluia!*
We share in his new life

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Easter

Alleluia! is our song. For forty days in Lent, the people of God listen to his word more attentively and spend more time in prayer and penance as we seek forgiveness and conversion. At the end of Holy Week, we enter the Easter Triduum, when we celebrate the dying and rising of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, for fifty days we sing *Alleluia!*

Easter vigil: During Holy Saturday night, the Church celebrates the victory of Christ over sin and death. He is the light of the world, who frees us from the kingdom of darkness and brings us into his kingdom of love.

Initiation. On Easter night, catechumens profess their faith and are plunged into the baptismal waters; confirmed with fragrant holy Chrism, they are welcomed to the Lord's table, where they are nourished with the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

Renewal. Other members of the Church profess their faith once more, renewing their baptismal promises to die with Christ to sin, and to live with him for God.

Easter Sunday is the greatest day of the Christian year. We praise God for all his wonderful works of creation and salvation, but especially for raising Jesus from the dead, and declaring him Lord. Jesus is the Saviour, the centre of salvation history.

We rejoice today with all Christians, for our heavenly Father has made us sharers in the grace of his Son. By baptism we die with him, are buried with him in death and are raised with him to glory. We share in his victory and his abundant new life.

Easter week: During this week, we continue our rejoicing over the resurrection of our Lord and his victory over sin and death. The daily gospel readings this week describe occasions on which the risen Jesus appeared to his followers.

The Easter octave ends with the second Sunday of the season. The gospel presents Thomas as he comes to believe in the risen Lord. We who did not see Christ in the flesh are called blessed also, because he has given us the faith to believe in him.

Easter season: Fifty days of Easter joy will bring us to the feast of Pentecost. God's gift of life is complete in the sending of the Holy Spirit.

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Paschal candle: During the Easter vigil, the Easter candle is prepared and lighted from the new fire. It symbolises and reminds us that Christ is the light of the world and that he is always present among his holy people. This candle is prominently displayed and is lighted for all liturgies during the Easter season.

Easter water: Water is blessed during the vigil for use in baptisms during the Easter season. This water is sprinkled over the people present at the vigil and on Easter Day as they renew their baptismal promises. We use blessed water in our homes as a reminder of our baptism, by which Jesus makes us the holy people of God.

Alleluia! is the song of the Easter season. It is a shout of joy and means "praise to God!" With Christ and all his Church, we rejoice that God has raised him up from death and has given us a share in his unending life.

Living in the Easter season: This season lasts for seven weeks or 50 days, extending between Easter and Pentecost. St. Athanasius (+373) called this period "the great Sunday".

Meaning. The Easter season is a time when Christians reflect on what it means to be God's Church, his people established in this place, witnesses to his resurrection. The new life and joy of those baptized at the Easter vigil is shared by all and we remember that it is through baptism that Jesus has made us God's holy people.

Relation to Lent. Easter is not a continuation of Lent, but rather the time to harvest the seeds which were planted during the 40 days. Now we live as the brothers and sisters of Jesus, sharing his love with others, looking for ways to serve others and save the world.

Recognizing Christ's presence: During the Easter season, we reflect on the many ways that Jesus is present among us.

Spring. The Easter season also means the return of spring, with its new life, flowers and the warmth of longer days.

Whenever two or three gather in his name, Jesus is with us – at home, in church, at work or at play. He is present, speaking to us when his gospel is proclaimed to us. He is present in our liturgical celebrations: in the assembly, the Scriptures, the ministers, in the power of his sacraments, in the Eucharist.

Our Lord assures us that he is the one we help whenever we feed the hungry, visit the sick or imprisoned, and clothe the naked. Jesus is always with his people.

Alleluia!