



# HOLY WEEK

The festival of Easter celebrates the resurrection from the dead of Jesus, three days after he was executed. The Easter story is at the heart of Christianity.

Christians believe that Jesus was the chosen one, the saviour, who through his death on the cross and resurrection, restored the relationship between God and humans and allowed people to get forgiveness for their sins.

The date of Easter changes each year, and several other Christian festivals fix their dates by reference to Easter. Churches are filled with flowers, and there are special hymns and songs.

## Symbols of Easter

**Easter Lilies** grow in the spring close to Easter time. Due to their appearance resembling a trumpet, they are a symbol for living forever with God.

**The cross** is a symbol of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is his victory over the power of sin and death. The cross has become the major symbol for God's power to forgive sins and give new life to people.

**The lamb** is another symbol associated with Jesus. He is often referred to in the Bible as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist described Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

**Palm** branches represent Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem after his 40 days and nights of fasting in the desert. This day is celebrated on Palm Sunday, when people welcomed Jesus by waving palm branches, which was normally only done for kings.

**The Paschal candle** (coming from the Latin word for Easter), is lit throughout Lent to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

**Hot cross buns** use the symbol of the cross to remind us of how Jesus died.

**Eggs and chicks** remind us that spring brings new life as Jesus rose again.



## Key Vocabulary

Messiah  
Mass  
Passover

Mandate  
Crucifixion  
Resurrection

Palm  
Maundy  
Symbolism

Paschal

**Palm Sunday** is the first day of Holy Week and celebrates Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Crowds of people came out of the city to greet him, throwing down palm branches on the road. In most countries, this day is celebrated with religious processions with crosses made from palm leaves or other plants to remind them of how Jesus was greeted in Jerusalem and of what came after.



**Maundy Thursday** is when Christians remember that Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples, breaking bread and drinking wine, which is now known as the Last Supper. The word 'Maundy' comes from the mandate (command) given by Jesus at the Last Supper, that we should love one another. Jesus demonstrated this by washing the feet of the disciples - something a servant would normally do. Many Christians remember this by sharing bread and wine together in a service called Holy Communion, Eucharist or Mass. It is a reminder that Jesus sacrificed his life for mankind. Roman Catholic Church services include a ceremony in which the priest washes the feet of 12 people to commemorate Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples.

**Good Friday** is the Friday before Easter Sunday. It commemorates the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. Good Friday is a day of mourning in church. During special Good Friday services Christians remember Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, and what this means for their faith. In some countries, there are special Good Friday processions, or re-enactments of the Crucifixion.

**Easter Sunday** marks Jesus' resurrection. After Jesus was crucified on the Friday (now known as Good Friday), his body was taken down from the cross, and buried in a cave tomb. On the Sunday, Mary Magdalene, followed later by some of Jesus' disciples visited the tomb and found that the stone had been moved, and that Jesus' body had gone. Jesus showed himself to Mary and the disciples that day, and for forty days afterwards by many people. Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the most important Christian festival and the one celebrated with the greatest joy.