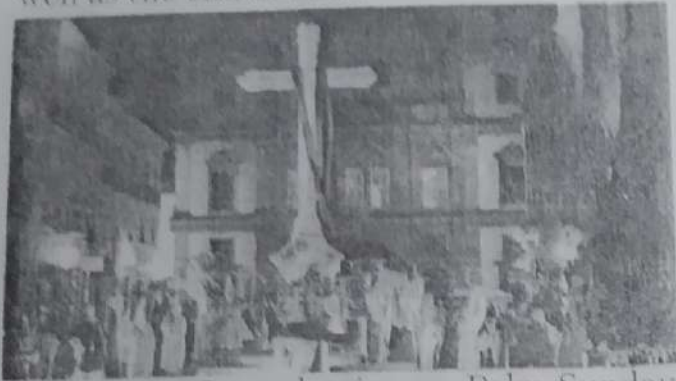


EASTER AROUND THE WORLD

Easter in South America

The Holy Week of Easter is the most important Catholic religious festival in South America. *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) celebrates the last days of Christ's life, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, as well as the end of Lent.



Semana Santa begins on Palm Sunday and culminates on Easter Sunday.

Each day has its rituals, processions through the streets with participants on their knees or carrying large wooden crosses.

On Palm Sunday palm leaves are blessed in the churches and people place the palm branches they have brought home from church behind their doors. They believe this assures the household of good luck and peace throughout the coming year. Churches are decorated with fruit and green plants.

In many communities there are religious processions and Passion plays, telling the Easter story: the Betrayal, the Judgment, the Procession of the 12 Stations of the Cross, the Crucifixion and, finally, the Resurrection. Participants are costumed and play their parts with reverence.

Easter Sunday is the most important religious day of the year. There are masses and religious observations, prayer meetings, and thousands of devout Catholics doing

homage. After church, people go into a wild celebration, with whistles, church bells, and fireworks. In many places, people play rough games with a straw figure dressed up as Judas, who told the Roman soldiers where to capture Jesus. The Judas is hanged or burned by the crowd.

Easter in Germany

Easter in Germany is at the end of March or at the beginning of April. It is always on a Sunday or a Monday. The Friday before Easter is Good Friday. No one has to work on any of these days. Many people eat fish on Good Friday. On Saturday evening they have a big Easter bonfire. This is very popular and many people come and watch these Easter bonfires, which are burnt as symbols of the end of winter and all bad feelings.

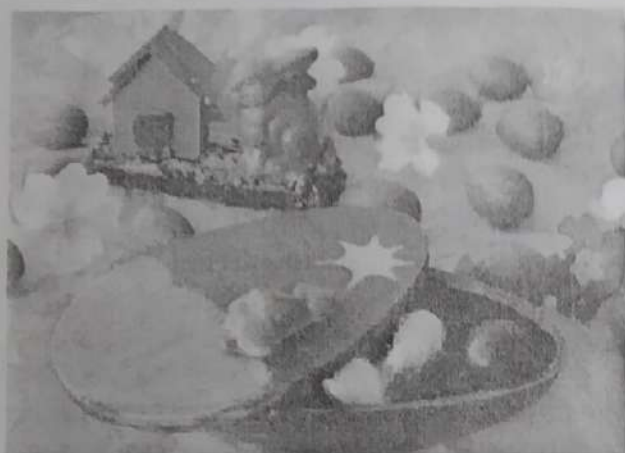
On Easter Sunday families have nice breakfasts together. Parents then hide Easter baskets with sweets, eggs and small presents. After that parents say "The Easter Bunny has hidden the Easter baskets, now you have to find them." Then the children search for them.

In the afternoon of Sunday and Monday friends and relatives visit each other and they usually have tea together. Every year they do the same things. School children have about three weeks holiday at Easter. No one works on Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday.

Eggs are an important part of German Easter customs. It is thought that the practice of exchanging eggs may have started before people started to pay taxes to their landlord. Eggs were then a way for people to pay their landlord, who then had to give some to the poor people. Today, it is not just the children who receive eggs, but adults

often exchange beautifully hand painted eggs. These are often accompanied with a special message.

Easter in Australia



There are people from many different cultures in Australia so Easter is celebrated in a variety of ways. The main day of celebration of families of Anglo-Irish backgrounds is Easter Sunday. Some people go to church services and have hot cross buns for breakfast. These are a sweet fruit bun, which may have a cross on top. Children exchange Easter eggs, which are usually made of chocolate. Some are now made from sugar and have little toys inside. The chocolate eggs are available in an egg shape, from tiny little ones to giant ones, some chocolate eggs are also in the shape of cheeky looking rabbits. In recent years Easter bilbys have also been made. The bilby is a native animal in Australia, which is an endangered species. Chocolate manufacturers decided to make Easter bilbys and give some of their profits to help protect these animals from extinction. Children don't worry about the shape. They just love the chocolate! Many families have an Easter hunt in their homes or gardens to see who can find the most eggs on Easter Sunday morning. They then share a meal with their relatives. Traditionally this has consisted of roast lamb, beef or chicken with roasted vegetables like potatoes, carrots, pumpkin and beans, peas, or broccoli.

There is a huge variation in the sorts of foods people may eat from seafood or lasagna, to salads and barbecues. One

dessert that is popular at family celebrations in Australia is the Pavlova. It is made out of egg whites and sugar.

Easter is a time when a lot of Australian families go away on holidays, as it is late summer or early autumn. Some go to the beach others to the mountains. Some people camp in tents, others stay in their holiday houses or rent one, or stay in hotels or motels. Most shops are closed from Good Friday to Easter Monday except those in holiday towns.

Easter in Spain

Spain is noted for its numerous festivals that occur throughout the year. One of the most famous is the celebration of *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) or simply *Pascua* (Easter). The entire week before Easter is one big celebration, full of religious as well as secular festivals. Beginning with the Domingo de Ramos (Palm Sunday) and ending with Lunes de Pascua (Easter Monday), Spain is filled with laughter and tears celebrating spring and renewal. It is a celebration of life itself, and the whole country comes alive. Each area, city and town has its own way of celebrations.

On Palm Sunday (the Domingo de Ramos) people go to mass in the morning, children carry palm leaves to be blessed by the priest. Boys carry a simple palm branch, and the girls carry a branch that has been decorated. They often have sweets, tinsel or other decorations hanging from them.

Every night through the Easter week specially chosen people, some of whom wear the traditional hooded costumes of the community, carry the statues of saints (*pasos*) through the streets on floats or



wooden platforms. In major cities the processions go on for miles and last until the early hours of the morning. The Easter week processions end with Easter Sunday, a day full of light and colour when church and cathedral bells are heard ringing throughout the country.

As in any Spanish festival, food and music are central to Easter celebration.

While most food served at these feasts are regional specialties (especially of meat, after the long fasting of Lent), there are a few special Easter foods unique to Spain such as an Easter cake, traditional Easter sweets and a variation of what is known in English as "Eggy Bread."

Easter in Italy

On Palm Sunday people take palm and olive branches to church to be blessed. When everyone is in the church, the doors are closed to represent the gates of Jerusalem. The priests knock three times, and the gates are then flung open in welcome, and they enter amid joyous music and the waving of palms. This is done to commemorate Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The palms are often spread over fields for good luck or for patching up quarrels as an expression of peace.

In Italy, church bells ring joyfully during the year. But the bells stop ringing on the Thursday before Good Friday. They are silent for a few days while people remember the death of Jesus.

La Pasqua (Easter) is a joyous day: the bells ring out, telling people that Jesus is alive again and when people hear the bells, they kiss and hug one another. After morning mass people return home for the Easter dinner. The most important dish is agnellino, roasted baby lamb. It is eaten with a special salad made with hard-boiled eggs. The table is decorated with colored eggs which have been blessed by the priest. In Italy, pretzels were originally an Easter food. The twisted shape is supposed to represent arms crossed in prayer.



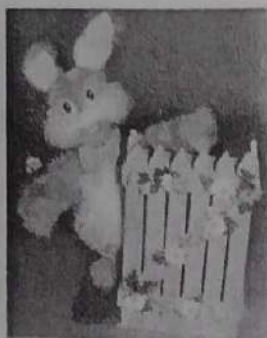
Bunnies

Bunnies are brown
Bunnies are white
Bunnies are always
An Easter delight.
Bunnies are cuddly
The large and the small,
But I like chocolate ones
Best of all.



Easter Everywhere

Rabbits soft and cuddly
Baby chickens, too.
Easter eggs for baskets
White and pink and blue.
Easter cards of greeting,
Music in the air,
Lilies just to tell us
It's Easter everywhere.



Some Things That Easter Brings

Easter duck and Easter chick,
Easter eggs with chocolate thick.
Easter hats for one and all,
Easter Bunny comes to call!
Happy Easter always brings
Such a lot of pleasant things.

