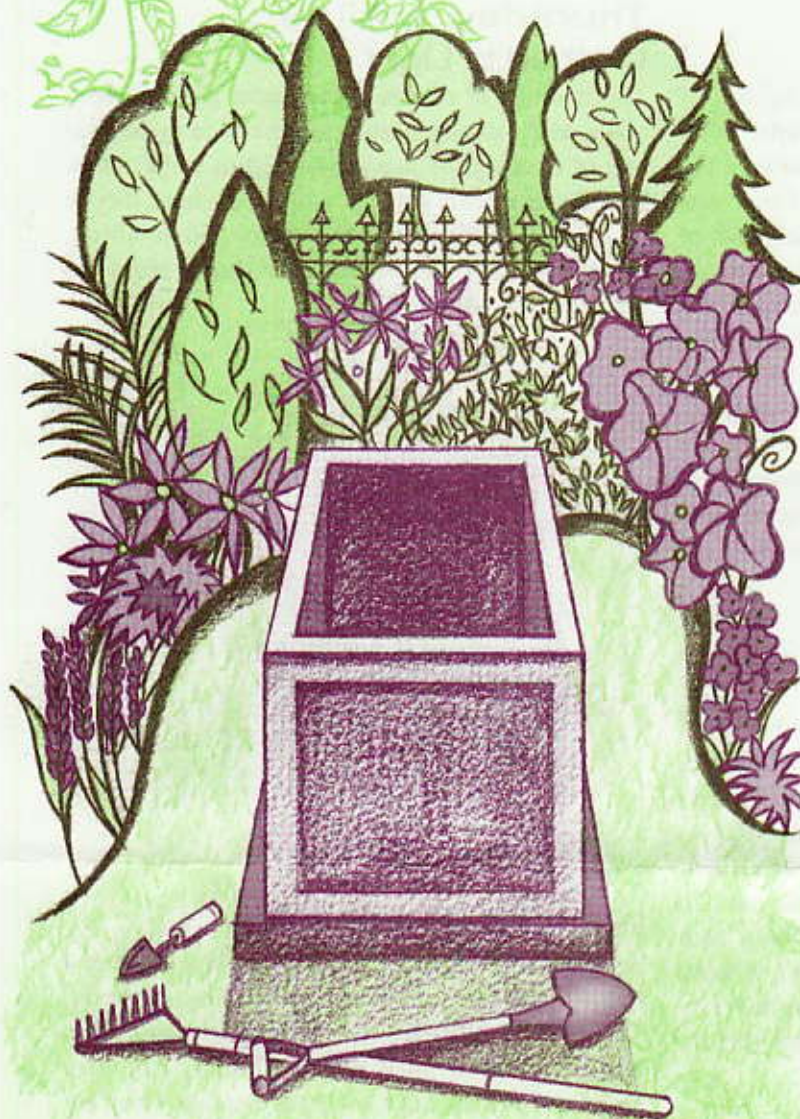


Easter Week



Blessing for an Easter Meal

God, our Father,
as we gather to celebrate
Christ's victory over death,
we ask you to bless our family meal.
Bless all who share these foods,
bless our absent loved ones,
and fill us all with the joy of this day.
Bless the hands of those
who prepared this feast.
May the food we eat
and the fellowship we share today
give us a foretaste of heaven
and fill us with longing for eternity.
Grant this through Christ,
our risen Lord. Amen.

April 12, 2009 Easter Feasting

We come to this solemnity of Easter, hungry for the bread of life and thirsty for the living waters Christ promises. The disciplines of Lent—almsgiving, prayer, and fasting—have taught us how to hunger, how to face our emptiness, poverty, and powerlessness. Like Mary of Magdala, we approach the tomb, expecting a corpse, but instead find emptiness and mystery. How many of us really know how to feast, how to give ourselves to the deep life-transforming love of God? We feel lost in the garden, unfamiliar with this Eden. Like Jesus' first friends and followers, we do not recognize him. We mistake him for a gardener, a stranger. The traditions of Easter season

teach us how to recognize God's presence among us, even in our loss, weakness, confusion, and isolation. Whenever we recognize that God is in our midst, our mourning is turned to joy. The experience of the Triduum suggests to us that it is not our outer circumstances that dictate our happiness, but our inner state. Christian joy springs from a deep spiritual knowledge and experience of love's victory. There is no more death. Now there is truly nothing that can separate us from our God. This is what true feasting is about; we discover the miracle of God's presence where we least expect to find him—within ourselves.

This Week at Home

Monday, April 13

Eight Days, Seven Weeks

From Easter Sunday until the Second Sunday of Easter, we celebrate eight special days of Easter joy—an octave. Then we continue to celebrate for six more weeks. Lent lasts 40 days, but the season of Easter lasts 50 days. During this time, we hear the accounts of Jesus' appearances to his disciples and his Ascension into heaven. The Easter season culminates in the solemnity of Pentecost (from the Greek, *Pentekoste*, or "fiftieth"), when the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ's followers. Which do you find more challenging, 40 days of penance or 50 days of rejoicing? The season of Easter is not about being entertained; it is about entering fully into the joy of the Resurrection. Keeping the feast is every bit as important as keeping the fast.

Tuesday, April 14

Sing Alleluia

The word *Alleluia* (meaning, "praise the Lord") is one of the few Hebrew words adopted from apostolic times by the Christian Church. It is mentioned by Saint John in the Apocalypse (Revelation 19:1-6) and has never been translated into the vernacular. During Lent, this joyful acclamation is not said. In fact, it was traditional in some places to "bury" and say farewell to the Alleluia at the beginning of Lent. At the Easter Vigil we once again sing this heavenly song. Sing Alleluia throughout the week (before meals and at bedtime).

Wednesday, April 15

Christ, Our Light

Many Easter traditions center on the two great symbols of fire and water. It is often only in a crisis that modern people get in touch with our profound human need for the light and warmth of fire and the cleansing power and nourishment of water. This week, pay attention to fire and water. Begin by blessing an Easter Christ candle and placing it on your dining table or home altar. Say this prayer of blessing: *Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world, a light no darkness can extinguish. Bless this candle, and all of us who turn to you in prayer. May the radiance of your light shine in our hearts throughout this Easter season. Amen.*

Thursday, April 16

Clothed in Light

The tradition of wearing new Easter clothes, especially white, during Easter can be traced to the custom of clothing the newly baptized in white robes. New Easter clothes aren't a fashion statement, they're an expression of joy and celebration. So go ahead, dress up! Wear your new clothes to church and when visiting loved ones.



Friday, April 17

Ring Those Bells

Invite an ancient Slavic custom into your home and express Easter joy with the ringing of bells. Traditionally, bells are rung at midnight on Easter, announcing, "Christ is risen." Church bells were rung from dawn to night on Easter Sunday. There are few sounds more joyful than the pealing of bells. Have a family Easter bell, or get each family member a bell to ring. Ring these bells at dawn on Easter day, at the blessing of the Easter meal, and at your family meal throughout the Easter season.

Saturday, April 18

Mystagogia

In the early Church, those who had been baptized at the Easter Vigil would gather daily during the octave of Easter to continue studying the Christian faith. These instructions were called "mystagogia." All Christians, not only the newly baptized, do well to reflect on the Easter mysteries, and to study our faith. This is a good time to join a Bible study or discussion group at your parish.

