



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Program

Holy Week is the annual Christian observance commemorating Jesus' last week on earth and the events leading up to his resurrection on Easter Sunday. It is the final week of Lent, and the week prior to Easter Sunday. The dates of Holy Week are defined by the date of Easter Sunday, which is a moveable feast, and therefore it falls on different dates from year to year.

Holy Week commences on Palm Sunday and ends on Holy Saturday. It includes the Christian observances and solemn holidays of Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday) and Holy Friday (Good Friday). In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Holy Week starts on Lazarus Saturday, the day before Palm Sunday.

HOLY WEEK IN WESTERN CHRISTIANITY

Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday)

The day when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, which may also be known as Passion Sunday in some denominations. Traditionally, Palm Sunday commemorates the Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was noted by the crowds present who shouted praises and waved palm branches.

Holy Monday

Jesus returns with his disciples to Jerusalem, along the way he cursed a fig tree, cleansed/cleared the temple, freed the sacrificial animals and responded to questioning of his authority.

Holy Tuesday

The importance of faith is spoken. Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives and gave the Olivet Discourse, a prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of age including His Second Coming and the final judgement.

Holy Wednesday

The story of Judas arranging his betrayal of Jesus with the chief priests is remembered. Judas was a spy among the disciples of Jesus (Matthew 26:14–25). For this reason, the day is sometimes called "Spy Wednesday".



Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday (also known as Holy Thursday) commemorates the Last Supper. Some consider this the feast of Passover. Also, it is when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples to demonstrate by example how believers should love on another. Some churches practice foot-washing ceremonies as part of Maundy Thursday services. This is also the day Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested.

Good Friday

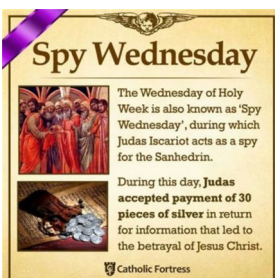
Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus and his subsequent death. Many religions observe Good Friday as a fasting day, with each defining fasting slightly different.

Holy Saturday (Black Saturday)

Holy Saturday is the day between the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection. Jesus rested in the tomb.

Easter Day / Resurrection Sunday

Easter Day, which immediately follows Holy Week and begins with the Easter Vigil, is the great feast day. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated. This is the most important event of the Christian faith.



Easter is the celebration of the day Jesus arose from the dead, three days after the Crucifixion. The holiday is a "movable feast," meaning the date, which is always a Sunday, changes every year and follows a similar calendar to the Hebrew calendar based on the lunar cycle. Easter typically falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the spring equinox.

Are Passover and Easter Related?

Because Passover and Easter often occur at or around the same time, many people mistakenly believe the two holidays are connected, however Passover and Easter are not directly related. Passover celebrates the Israelites freeing slavery in Egypt, while Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.

There are a few notable connections: Jesus was known to have celebrated Passover and attended the feasts and celebrations (in fact, the Last Supper was likely a Passover Seder). Because Jesus' death and resurrection occurred during Passover, the timing of the two holidays typically overlap in modern times as well.



Easter Eggs: Easter is a religious holiday, but some of its customs, such as Easter eggs, are likely linked to pagan traditions. The egg, an ancient symbol of new life, has been associated with pagan festivals celebrating spring. From a Christian

perspective, Easter eggs are said to represent Jesus' emergence from the tomb and resurrection. Decorating eggs for Easter is a tradition that dates back to at least the 13th century. An explanation for this custom is that eggs were formerly a forbidden food during the Lenten season, so people would paint and decorate them to mark the end of the period of penance and fasting, then eat them on Easter as a celebration.

Dyeing Easter eggs may have a deeper religious connection as well. One tradition regarding Easter eggs is related to Mary Magdalene, the first person to see Jesus after the Resurrection. As the story goes, she was holding a plain egg in the presence of an emperor and proclaiming the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The emperor said that Jesus' rising from the dead was as likely as that egg turning red and the egg turned bright red while he was still speaking.



White Easter Lilies symbolize the purity of Christ to Christians and are common decorations in churches and homes around the Easter holiday. Their growth from dormant bulbs in the ground to flowers symbolize the rebirth and hope of Christ's resurrection. They went on to become the unofficial flower of Easter celebrations across the United States.

Easter Parades: In New York City, the Easter Parade tradition dates back to the mid-1800s, when the upper crust of society would attend Easter services at various Fifth Avenue churches then stroll outside afterward, showing off their new spring outfits and hats. Average citizens started showing up along Fifth Avenue to check out the action. The tradition reached its peak by the mid-20th century.

Lamb is a traditional Easter food. Christians refer to Jesus as the "Lamb of God," though lamb at Easter also has roots in early Passover celebrations. In the story of Exodus, the people of Egypt suffered a series of terrible plagues, including the death of all firstborn sons. Members of the Jewish faith painted their doorposts with sacrificed lamb's blood so that God would "pass over" their homes. Jews who converted to Christianity continued the tradition of eating lamb at Easter. Historically, lamb would have been one of the first fresh meats available after a long winter with no livestock to slaughter.



Some claim that the word Easter derives from Eostre, a pagan goddess of spring and fertility. According to folklore, Eostre found a bird dying from the cold and turned it into a rabbit so its fur would keep it warm, but that rabbit still laid eggs like a bird. In one version of the story, the bunny paints and decorates the eggs as a gift to Eostre to show his loyalty and love. It's possible this story is the reason for the Easter Bunny tradition and why bunnies, birds and chicks are connected with the holiday.

