

Easter

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Easter, the celebration of Christ's Resurrection, is the oldest and most solemn feast of the liturgical year.

The Resurrection is recorded in the Gospels and proclaimed in the New Testament, particularly by St. Paul, who wrote that without the Resurrection, "your faith has been in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Disciples who knew Jesus was dead and where he was buried went to his tomb, but found it empty, and were told: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised" (Luke 24:5-6). Later, St. Paul writes, the risen Jesus appeared to more than five hundred disciples (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Throughout the centuries, Christians have continued to try to understand, appreciate and celebrate the significance of this most central experience for the life of the Church.

Acknowledging the Resurrection's mysterious depths, the Church's liturgical cycles are based on remembering and celebrating Easter. Every Sunday is a memorial of Easter, a "little Easter." Easter is the only feast in which every day of its Octave (Eight Days) is itself a "solemnity," the highest ranking given to any day. And the 50-day Easter season, from Easter to Pentecost Sunday, is the longest except for Ordinary Time.

Liturgical exuberance at Easter is intended to draw us into a celebration of God's gift of salvation, to revive in us an appreciation of the promise of new life. Pope Francis reminds us that "Christ's resurrection is not an event of the past but contains a vital power that has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force." The *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil boldly declares: "O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"

As if to remind us that our Easter joy is fulfilled only when we do our part, when we respond faithfully to our baptismal call to love God and others as ourselves, the Church asks us to renew our baptism promises to reject evil and to "serve God faithfully in his holy Catholic Church."

"Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the 'Feast of feasts,' the 'Solemnity of solemnities,' just as the Eucharist is the 'Sacrament of sacraments' (the Great Sacrament). The mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him."

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1169

