

FIRST LADY'S MESSAGE

Easter Symbols and Traditions

First Lady By: Mary Jane Grauso

Easter symbols and traditions have evolved over time. To Christians, Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. Though many Easter traditions are not found in the Bible, the most prominent secular symbol of this holiday is the Easter Bunny which was introduced to America by the German immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania and brought their tradition of an egg-laying hare called "Osterhause" or "Oschter Haws. "Their children made nests in which this creature could lay its colored eggs." The custom eventually spread across the U.S. and the fabled rabbit's Easter morning deliveries expanded to include chocolate and many other types of candy and gifts, and decorated baskets replaced nests. It was a tradition for children to leave out carrots for the



bunny in case he got hungry from all the hopping. As a child growing up it was fun dyeing the hard boiled eggs [parents would purchase dye kits which contained different color dye tablets in the local grocery store], going on egg hunts, receiving little chicks from the pet shops and eating chocolate bunnies.

Though Easter is a religious holiday some of its customs, such as Easter eggs are pagan traditions. The egg is an ancient symbol of new life associated with pagan festivals celebrating spring. As a Christian perspective, Easter eggs represent Jesus' emergence from the tomb and resurrection. Decorating eggs is a tradition

dating back to 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. Easter egg hunts and egg rolling are two popular egg-related traditions in the U.S. The White House Easter egg roll is an annual event held the Monday after Easter. Some have considered egg-rolling symbolic of the stone blocking Jesus' tomb being rolled away, leading to his resurrection.



Then there is the New York City Easter parade dating back to the 1800's when the wealthy upper crust of society would attend Easter services at various fifth avenue churches after which they would stroll outside showing off their new spring outfits and hats. I remember singing the song "In Your Easter Bonnet with all the frills upon it you'll be the grandest lady in the Easter parade," while in grade school. The Easter parade continues in Manhattan along Fifth Avenue from 49th street to 57th street all traffic is shut down during the day. Participants sport elaborately decorated bonnets and hats.



A traditional Easter food is lamb. 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 their 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. Growing up it has been a tradition in my family to make Leg of Lamb for Easter along with all the trimmings followed by homemade desserts like Ricotta and Pastiera di Grano [Wheat] pies which my mom made from scratch.

The prominent Easter flower are white Easter Lilies that symbolize the purity of Christ to Christians and are common decorations in churches and homes around the Easter Holiday. Their growth from dormant bulbs to flowers symbolizes the rebirth and hope of Christ's resurrection.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter,

Mary Jane. First Lady



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en. We should be thankful that through Jesus's resurrection, it gives us the needed hope to courageously face life's challenge in spite of everything. That without the resurrection our suffering would be meaningless, our belief in God would be nothing, our love would be fruitless and our death would be in vain. "This resurrection gives us unfailing hope in God's testament of love: we pass over from the bondage of Satan to the freedom of Christ, we pass over from an insecure world to the certainty of the Kingdom of God and we pass from mortal lives to the abiding presence of God. Again, we should be thankful for this. We should be thankful that Jesus calls us His friends, his intimate friends in spite of what we have done. Just like what His apostles have done to Him. He did not accuse them of leaving Him alone in crisis. He gave them a chance to make up of their lives again because he knew them and us too to Him. He knows our fears, our doubts, our fragilities, our self-centeredness and our unfaithfulness. He knows our best and our worst moments, our ups and downs, our vulnerabilities, brokenness, stupidities, mistakes and hang-ups. He knows us fully and yet in spite of these, he loves us unconditionally.

Happy Easter!!!! Vivat Jesus!
Fr jojo