**THE SEASON OF EASTER**

Contrary to what many people think, **Easter is not a single day - it is a season!** Easter begins with the Easter Vigil and continues for 50 days – that’s seven full weeks - **not just one day!** During this time, the church celebrates the **Lord’s Resurrection,** His appearances to the disciples on and after Easter Sunday, His post-resurrection teachings, His ascension into heaven, and in the final days of the season, the anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The following information may help you and your family come to understand the meaning, customs and traditions of the **Easter Season** more fully.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- **Easter is the beginning of a new season of grace and a time of great joy, celebration and thanksgiving.**
- The celebration of the Easter Vigil is the beginning of the season of Easter.
- The traditional colour used during Easter is white, however gold may also be used.
- Contrary to the belief of many people that Christmas is the biggest celebration for Christians, **Easter** is the most important season in the Christian Calendar.
- It is the heart of our Faith – it is the climax and centre of the liturgical year.

**WHAT IS THE PASchal CANDLE?**

- The paschal candle is an ancient symbol of the risen Jesus and commonly used during the Great Fifty Days of Easter.
- It is a very large white candle, the largest and tallest of all sanctuary candles.
- Paschal candles are always inscribed with a cross, the current year, and the Greek letters, **alpha and omega,** signifying that the Lord is present in His church now and forever in eternity.
- Sometimes, five grains of incense, symbolizing the five wounds of Christ, are pressed into the arms and centre of the cross with pins or small nails.
- The paschal candle is prominently featured in the service of the Easter Vigil, during which it is first lighted and brought into the sanctuary. According to ancient liturgical tradition, it is allowed to shine continuously throughout the 50 days of the Easter Season.
- After that, it is removed from its place next to the altar and placed near the baptismal font. It is lit at baptisms to symbolise God’s resurrected presence that shines the light of Christ’s glory in our lives.
- The paschal candle may also be lit at Christian funerals as a reminder that those who die in Christ, are raised up with Him to eternal life.
WAYS WE CAN CELEBRATE THE EASTER SEASON?

- **EASTER SYMBOLS** - Decorate your windows or a table with the symbols associated with this time - eggs, lambs, butterflies, bells, even peacocks! Talk to your children about what these symbols mean. They could even research some more.
- **COOK AND EAT FOOD** - Lent and the time of fasting is over. Many cultures have beautiful traditions around food this time of year. Google some recipes, invite friends over, or just make something new for your immediate family.
- **EASTER GRATITUDE** – Choose a time each day where each family member shares three things for which to be grateful. This could be done at meal- times or before bed. You may even like to write them down in a Family Gratitude Journal. Giving thanks is our response to the goodness of God.
- **SPEND TIME TOGETHER** – Easter is a time for giving thanks and being joyful for the gift of new life. Reflect on the joy in your own life. Spend time with your children doing things that bring joy and laughter. Play hide and seek inside the house, put on some of your favourite music and dance around with your children, snuggle on the lounge and watch a video or play a board game together.
- **CELEBRATE LIFE** - Go for a bushwalk or ride your bike- celebrate the health of your physical body. Easter is a time of renewal and restoration. Exercise outdoors reminds us of what it is to be fully alive and in touch with all our senses. Celebrate this enormous gift!
- **VISIT THE CHURCH** – On your way to dropping off/picking up your child from school, why not visit the Church and say a prayer of thanksgiving together. Think of the blessings and joy in your life and praise and give thanks to God.

THE RESURRECTION

- To believe in the Resurrection is to be a bearer of hope.
- Christ Crucified is all of the hidden, private, tragic pain of history, made public and given over to God.
- Christ Resurrected is all suffering received, loved, and transformed by an All-Caring God.

- How else could we be bearers of hope, joy and love?
- How else would we not die of sadness for what humanity has done to itself and to one another?

- *The cross is the standing statement of what we do to one another and to ourselves.*

- *The resurrection is the standing statement of what God does to us in return.*

- *Because of the promise of the Resurrection of Jesus we realistically can believe that tomorrow can be better than today - a future full of joy, love and hope!*

**ALLELUIA!**

- What does this great word, *Alleluia*, mean and why do we say it during the Easter Season?
- The word, *Alleluia*, comes to us from the Hebrew language, and it means, *Let us praise Yahweh*. It is a term of great joy, traditionally seen as the chief term of praise of the choirs of angels.
- *Hallelujah or Halleluyah*, is found mainly in the book of Psalms and less often in Revelations.
- These translations are used in Judaism as part of the Hallel prayers. Hallel in Hebrew means, a joyous praise or to boast in God.
- Although *Hallelujah* has been accepted into the English language, its Latin form, *Alleluia* is what is used by many English-speaking Christians, in preference to Halleluiah.
- On Easter Sunday, while the media is hyping up chocolate eggs and rabbits, the Catholic Church celebrates God's great triumph over sin and death with the ancient greeting: *Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*