

Celebrating the

Easter Season

at Home



April 12 – May 31, 2020

EASTER

Blessings & Prayers



Easter Daily Devotion

Rejoice and be glad, Alleluia!

Let the joy of the Resurrection
fill me every day, O Lord.

Rejoice and be glad, Alleluia!

May the Spirit's grace and power
bless me this day, O Lord.

Rejoice and be glad, Alleluia!

Help me to be a sign of your life and love
today and every day, O Lord.

Rejoice and be glad, Alleluia!

Table Prayer for the Season of Easter

This is the day the Lord has made!

On this Day of days
we are filled with Easter joy
and nourished by the fruits of earth.

On this Day of days
may we know the presence of Christ
in breaking bread with those we love.

On this Day of days
let us show his presence to the poor and hungry
as our service to them is a sign of his glory.

This is the day the Lord has made!

Let all the earth cry out with joy
on this Day of days.

May this meal be blessed,
as we will be at the feast of heaven. Amen.

Regina Caeli, Laetare. Alleluia! (An Easter Prayer to the Mother of God)

Rejoice, Queen of heaven. Alleluia!
Lead the rejoicing of all the saved, Holy Mary, Mother of God.

You were chosen to be Christ's mother. Alleluia!
*Help us remain faithful children of light, Holy Mary,
Mother of God.*

Christ has risen as he said. Alleluia!
Let us follow your example, Holy Mary, Mother of God.

Pray for us to God. Alleluia!
*With all the saints, Holy Mary, Mother of God,
intercede for us at the throne of grace.*

Rejoice and be glad: the Lord is truly risen. Alleluia!
*May our joy bring us, Holy Mary, Mother of God,
to join you and the hosts of heaven,
singing eternal praises in glory for all eternity. Alleluia!*

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An

Easter Letter

from Saint Athanasius of Alexandria

My people,

Do you know the term "Arianism"? Perhaps not; it passed into memory a millennium and a half ago. This heresy claimed that the Son was created by—and was not one in being with—the Father. Therefore, Arians thought Jesus could not be fully divine.

I spent my life fighting this heresy, beginning as a young man at the Council of Nicaea. I was not always successful, and was exiled from the Church five times. More and more leaders of the Church and state accepted Arianism. During this time, I was even excommunicated for a while! Sometimes, I felt as if I stood alone against the world.

And yet in the end, Arianism—a misrepresentation of the very nature of God—faded away. God's truth cannot be overcome.

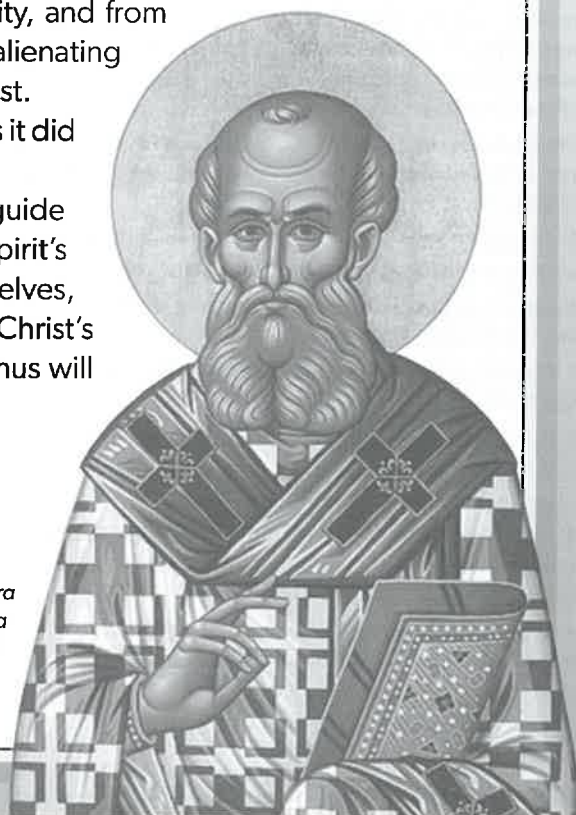
There are battles being waged in your time, too. The assault on the Body of Christ comes from outside, from those who see the Church as closed-minded or backward. It also comes from within the Body, with various sides seeking only victory and failing to show the merciful heart of God. There is division over questions of worship and authority, and how to deal with scandal. It likewise comes from those who believe that worldly status or affluence signal God's favor—a view that stands directly at odds with the teachings of Christ himself. It comes from professed believers who mistake uniformity for unity, and from those whose words and actions bespeak division, often alienating the very people most in need of the healing touch of Christ.

The Church in your day cries out for healing, just as it did in mine.

But take heart, my children. The Holy Spirit will guide the Church through this time, as in every other. Seek the Spirit's guidance with a sincere heart. In the Spirit, allow yourselves, individual members of the Body of Christ, to be remade in Christ's image. Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church, and thus will the entire Church be renewed.

Athanasius of Alexandria

A fourth-century Egyptian bishop known during his life as "Athanasius Contra Mundum" (Athanasius against the World), Athanasius was soon recognized as a "pillar of the Church" by Gregory of Nazianzus. He is a doctor of the Church and had great influence on the canon of books included in the Bible. In the west, his feast day is celebrated on May 2.



Easter Season Scripture Crossword Puzzle

Test your knowledge of scripture: use the blanks in the quotes below, drawn from the Easter season readings, to fill in the crossword. Stumped? Look up the references in your Bible—without a web search.

1. He **[9 down]** us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one **[16 down]** by God as judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42)

2. Come to him, a living stone, **[11 across]** by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God. (1 Peter 2:4)

3. In my Father's house there are many **[26 down]** places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? (John 14:2)

4. The community of believers was of one **[19 down]** and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in **[21 down]**. (Acts 4:32)

5. The stone the builders rejected has become the **[21 across]**. (Psalm 118:22)

6. You have died, and your life is **[6 down]** with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3)

7. I bless the LORD who **[8 across]** me. (Psalm 16:7)

8. You were **[12 down]** from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with **[5 across]** things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb. (1 Peter 1:18–19)

9. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of **[2 down]** and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of **[29 across]** and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:8)

10. All who believed . . . would sell their property and **[17 across]** and divide them among all according to each one's need. (Acts 2:44, 45)

11. I was hard pressed and **[15 across]**, but the LORD came to my help. (Psalm 118:13)

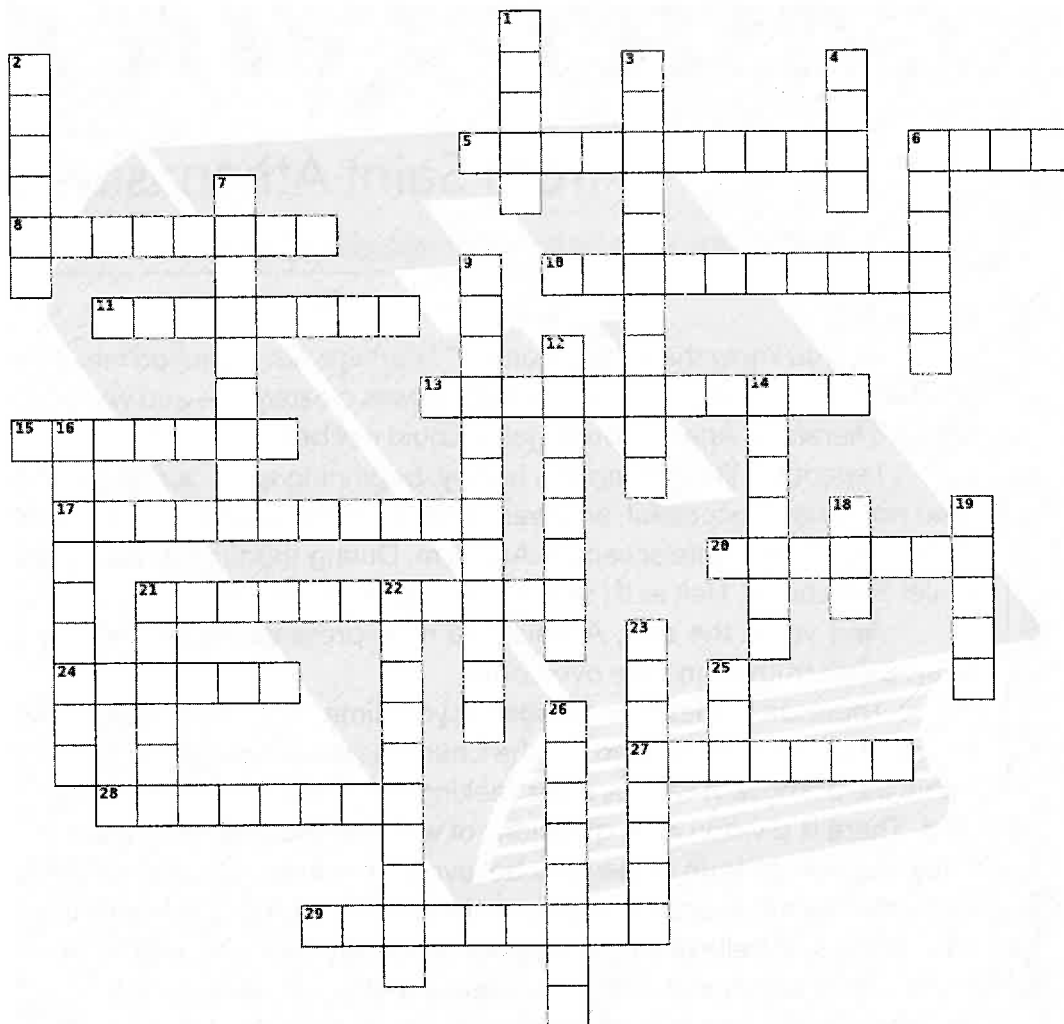
12. Now when they heard this, they were **[25 down]** to the heart. (Acts 2:37)

13. Do you not know that a little yeast **[14 down]** all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough. (1 Corinthians 5:6–7)

14. Now if you invoke as Father him who judges **[13 across]** according to each one's works, conduct yourselves with **[7 down]** during the time of your **[22 down]**. (1 Peter 1:17)

15. In this you **[20 across]**, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials. (1 Peter 1:6)

16. If you are **[27 across]** when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. (1 Peter 2:20)



17. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned **[23 down]** or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were **[3 down]** to each according to need. (Acts 4:34–35)

18. Then many of his disciples who were listening said, "This saying is **[6 across]**; who can accept it?" (John 6:60)

19. Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy **[10 across]**. (1 Peter 2:5)

20. Peter and John, however, said to them in reply, "Whether it is right in the sight of God for us to **[4 down]** you rather than God, you be the judges." (Acts 4:19)

21. But during the night, the **[1 down]** of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, led them out, and said, "Go and take your place in the **[24 across]** area, and tell the people everything about this life." (Acts 5:19–20)

22. "If this **[28 across]** or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against **[18 down]**." (Acts 5:38–39)

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What impact do my Baptismal vows have on my everyday life?

This Easter season, spend some time each week pondering the questions below to discern how your ordinary world might better reflect the Baptismal promises you renewed on Easter Sunday.

Week One: Do you renounce Satan?

Where does Satan work on your life and your heart? Where does temptation meet you? Food? Social media? Anger? What can you do to break the cycle and reject Satan's hold?

Week Two: And all his works?

Satan's work is to divide. Where in your life is division rampant? What issues do you approach in an all-or-nothing way, leading to judgment and acrimony? What can you do to bridge division when you encounter it in daily life?

Week Three: And all his empty show?

Which of Satan's promises are hardest for you to resist? Comfort, power, admiration, prestige, luxury, self-righteousness? When do you find yourself unwilling to sacrifice those things in order to see God's kingdom of justice made real on earth? What stands in the way of truly rejecting these empty promises?

Week Four: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

If God made all things, then we must treat the created world with reverence. List three ways you can treat God's creation with greater reverence and better stewardship.

Week Five: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

Because of Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection, everyone on earth is invited to the heavenly banquet. What does this mean for your interactions with those on the margins of your ordinary life: philosophical/political opponents, those of other cultures or religions? How can you better honor them as bearers of God's image?

Week Six: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

The Spirit moves every person in a unique way. Do you invite the Spirit to dwell in you, or are you afraid? Where in your life do you need the Spirit's guidance, discernment, or healing?

Week Seven: Do you believe in the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

Belief manifests in action. What gifts can you offer to the Church? What prevents you from giving of your time? What can you do to change that?



CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF THE *Ascension*

In much of the United States, the feast of the Ascension has been permanently transferred to Sunday. Lacking the obligation, this feast often feels more “ordinary” than “holy day.” But it hasn’t always been that way. In fact, there are a number of interesting traditions associated with the feast of the Ascension:

- Horse races
- A picnic on a high place (a nod to the setting of the Ascension story)
- A meal with some sort of bird for a main dish, to represent Christ “flying” up to heaven
- “Beating the bounds,” in which parishioners walked around the church property marking the boundaries by writing on them in chalk or hitting them with sticks
- The Wedding with the Sea, a colorful festival in Venice celebrated to this day in conjunction with the Ascension

Many places also incorporated rituals held within the church. The blessing of the “first fruits,” in honor of Christ, the “firstfruits” of those who have died, ascending to heaven, was a common tradition. Because the Ascension falls in the late spring, when the year’s first crops begin to produce, many communities used the occasion to pray for blessings on the growing season.

Other rituals associated with this feast include:

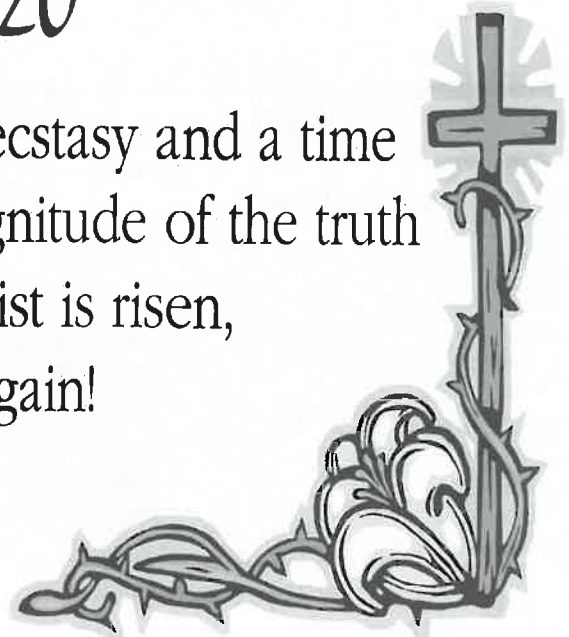
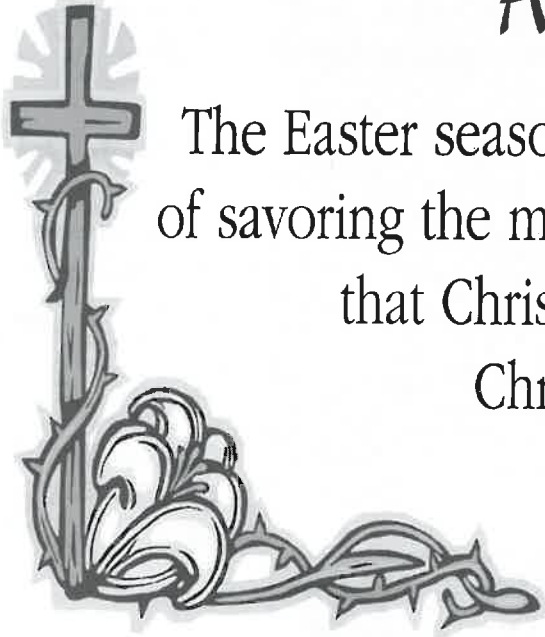
- the blessing of a candle
- processions with torches and banners
- reenacting the Ascension by raising an image of Christ above the altar and through an opening on the roof

The cathedral at Florence celebrated a particularly colorful ritual. A dove slid down a string from the high altar, landing in a container of fireworks placed in front of the building’s main entrance, which then ignited.

Many of these special effects would seem trite in modern life, and as rural communities shrink, the rituals of the agricultural year might not resonate. But everyone can enjoy a picnic. If you can hike to a high place for it, so much the better. Honor the culinary tradition by packing cold fried chicken as a main dish. Another possibility is to use cookie cutters to make bird-shaped biscuits or cookies. Have grapes, to remember the Italian tradition, or whatever “firstfruits” are seasonal in your area: strawberries, broccoli, lettuce, and so on.

Easter Sunday April 12, 2020

The Easter season is a time of ecstasy and a time of savoring the mystery and magnitude of the truth that Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!



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