

Easter Trivia from Rev. Elisabeth

You might want to create slips with the question on to hide in hollow Easter eggs, then turn it into a trivia game, with mini eggs as rewards.

1. What name do we give to the day Jesus was raised from the tomb? (Try other languages too.)

Easter, Eostre, Paques, Pasqua (Italian), Pascua (Spanish), Pascha, Пасха, Pasg (Welsh)

(Pascha is a Latin transliteration of the Hebrew *pesach*, referring to the Passover.

(Eostre: Its origin is obscure, but it seems to have roots in Indo-European languages related to "bright" or "shining.")

2. What is the significance of the Easter Bunny?

It has Pagan origins. Due to their obvious fertility, rabbits (and hares) were often figures symbolizing birth, new birth, and Spring.

In the US, German immigrants in the 1700s recounted the story of an egg-laying hare, the *Osterhase*, who would reward good children with coloured eggs, and eventually small toys, and candy. (Why eggs? See below!) Children would make nests for the hare to lay these coloured eggs, and then hunt for them on Easter morning.

3. Easter eggs... There aren't any in the Jesus story, so what do they mean?

They are another ancient (pre-Christian) symbol for fertility and new life. In the 1st century, the empty shell, reminiscent of the empty tomb, associated the egg with the story of the resurrection.

In the 13th century eggs were among the foods forbidden during the Lenten fast. A big deal was made of their return to the table, painting or decorating them. (Ukrainian *pysanky* pre-date Christian tradition, but became incorporated into the faith when it reached that region.)

Jellybeans were substituted for eggs during in the 1930s in US, and have remained a staple of Easter basket treats ever since.

4. Why does the date of Easter move around to different dates in the (Canadian) Spring?

The date for Easter is calculated on a lunisolar calendar (solar year + lunar phases), in similar fashion to the Hebrew/Jewish calendrical calculation for Passover. For centuries different regions celebrated Easter at different times, but MOST of the Western Christian churches now use this formula: Easter falls on the first Sunday after the full moon which occurs on or after the Spring Equinox (March 21st). Hence Easter is celebrated as early as March 22 and as late as April 25.

5. Why do lots of people give things up for Lent?

For centuries all Christians would fast (not eat) during the season of Lent, to copy Jesus who spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness. It is still practised by some Christians (not just Roman Catholic Christians) with varying degrees of rigour.

Fasting is more rigorous than "abstinence". Fasting means no eating, and sometimes no drinking. Abstinence means giving up certain foods and drinks for the duration of Lent. Many Christian traditions abstained from meat, dairy, alcohol, sugar (and candy). It's from this that the idea of "giving up" something nice for Lent emerges.

The intention is to experience restraint, and to add a spiritual discipline (like prayer, or reading Scripture) for each day, in order to grow closer to God, and to the sacrifice of Jesus.

6. Hiding Hallelujahs during Lent: Why?

Lent is considered to be a season of “repentance,” grief and solidarity with the sacrifices Jesus made, both in the wilderness, and in the events of “Holy Week” that led to his execution on a cross. The word “Hallelujah” means “Praise God!” and is a joyful word.

The practise of not speaking or singing the word during Lent has expanded to include hiding or even burying written Hallelujahs. Many will hide them in the church, and for each one found, the congregation shouts or sings “Hallelujah!”

7. Did you know pretzels are originally a Lenten Food?

When Christians prepared for the Lenten fast, all dairy products, sweet things, and sometimes yeast, were stored away until after Easter. During Lent in Germanic countries, from the 5th century onward, Lenten bread was made without yeast or sugar, out of flour, water and salt, and rolled into the shape of two arms praying. (The word “pretzel” or “bretzel” comes from the Latin word *bracella* = little arms.

In contrast an Easter Pascha or Paska loaf was made with butter, sugar, candied fruits, egg and yeast, and was often shaped into a braided crown... it uses all the ingredients that were forbidden during Lent.

8. Why purple for Lent?

In Roman times the colour purple was reserved for royalty, or rulers. In the Gospels we’re told that when Jesus was arrested and tried, he was draped with a purple cloth as a way to mock (or bully) him, because he was accused of claiming he was “King of the Jews” which at that time was a crime against the Roman occupiers of the land. Christians use Lent to decorate their churches, and often the clergy wear purple, to remind us that in fact Jesus, as God’s Son, is our Lord and king. Everything stays purple until Easter morning, when it is replaced with gold, and white.

9. They say Lent is 40 days long. Why then is it actually more than that?

Lent includes 40 weekdays, but also 6 Sundays. The Sundays “don’t count” in the 40 days of Lent, so it really lasts for 46 days! Confusing, but there you have it!

10. Why are there usually three crosses on pictures for Good Friday and Easter?

If you read the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, you’ll read about two other men who were crucified at the same time as Jesus. (Because crucifixion was, unfortunately, a very common way to punish criminals in the Roman empire).

11. Why, if Jesus died on Good Friday, do we call it “good”?

It is indeed the day when we remember Jesus’ execution on a cross. In some traditions this Friday is also known as Black Friday or Holy Friday (Vendredi Saint). “Good” is actually an old English word that often meant (and means) “holy.” It is, for Christians, a very holy day.

In other languages this day is known as “mourning Friday”: for example, Karfreitag or “silent” Friday (Stiller Freitag) in German, and in Polish and other East European languages it is “Great Friday” (*Μεγάλη Παρασκευή, Wielki Piątek, Nagypéntek*).

12. Where did Jesus go after he rose from the dead?

All Four Gospels tell us that Jesus was seen by, and met with, his disciples in various places, including the upper room in Jerusalem, and especially in the region of the Sea of Galilee.

In Lukes Gospel, and in the book of Acts, Jesus brought his disciples to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, 40 days after the resurrection, and “ascended” into heaven.

From these stories in the different Gospels, we get a clear picture that people experienced Jesus' resurrection first-hand, but also that he did not stay around to grow old and die at the end of a long life. It was enough to show that God's love can outlast the grave, and that the message, or Good News, of Jesus is worth living in every generation, and even now, 2,000 years later.

13. Lamb and traditional foods

Every country that celebrates Easter has its own special foods to mark this most amazingly festive day. For many, lamb is a centrepiece – it's "in season" and has many symbolic associations with Jesus as the Good Shepherd, as the Passover lamb. Often the first garden crops of the spring accompany the festive meal in countries in the Northern hemisphere.

Usually dairy, eggs, yeast, and sweet things are shared at an Easter meal, to mark the end of a season of fasting and abstinence.

What special foods do you eat at Easter?

