10+ ways to celebrate Easter with your kids with food, fun, and prayer

Easter marks the high point of the entire liturgical year. Here's how to celebrate the season with your kids. In this article, we'll cover some basic facts about the Easter season; some games to play on Easter (including a cool idea for Easter egg hunts); foods to eat during the Easter season; and prayers to pray.

The Easter season: Good to know

Let's begin with some basics about the Easter liturgy:

- We're singing the alleluia again, after "burying" the alleluia for the forty days of Lent.
- We're ringing bells again (if your church has any).
- The Sequence, an ancient liturgical hymn, is sung before the proclamation of the Gospel.
- Instead of the profession of faith ("I believe…"), we're renewing our baptismal promises and being sprinkled with the waters of baptism.

Here are some good things to know about the Easter season:

- Did you know that the Resurrection is such an important event, the Church celebrates it for 50 days? That is longer than any other liturgical season!
- Forty days after Easter, we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord . . . although in most dioceses of the United States, the Ascension is celebrated on the Seventh Sunday of Easter.
- Fifty days after Easter we celebrate Pentecost, the

descent of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost officially ends the Easter season.

- The liturgical color of Easter is white. Sometimes, gold or silver vestments are worn on especially important days within the Easter season.
- Did you know that we celebrate Easter in an especially intense way during the Octave of Easter? “At Masses during the Octave of Easter, as on Sundays, the Gloria is recited or sung. And at the end of each Mass of the Octave, the double Alleluia is sung at the dismissal.” (Read more about the Octaves here.)

Games for Easter

Easter egg hunt with a kid-friendly twist

Who isn’t familiar with the traditional Easter egg hunt? But Meagan Daoust offers this kid-friendly twist: “Each child gets a color assigned to them ahead of time, e.g., Joey looks for blue eggs and Sara looks for pink eggs. Each child gets the same number of eggs. This allows discretion for how the eggs are filled and hid. Our littlest ones have their eggs scattered on the grass; the rest of the eggs are hid based on the height and climbing ability of the child and their assigned egg color. It’s more fun; no tears from little ones who didn’t find eggs. And you know when all the eggs are found. …We also try and have one gold egg for each child that we leave empty to remind us of the empty tomb, or you could include a coin to represent the price that was paid.”

Foot races

Re-enact today’s Gospel reading with foot races. If you have kids of different ages, give the younger kids a head start, or even things up by having a sack race, or having everyone race like different animals (hop like a bunny, slither like a

snake).

Egg rolls

Once your Easter egg hunt is over, do an Easter egg roll. There are different ways to do this, including rolling eggs down a slope (the one that goes furthest wins), or rolling them across the lawn with a spoon.

Egg tossing

Egg tossing is not only an Easter tradition around the world but also a sport regulated by the World Egg Throwing Federation. As you might imagine, the competition usually involves throwing or tossing an egg, either into a soft lawn or to a teammate; the person or team who manages to throw the egg farthest without breaking it wins.

Fly a kite

In Bermuda, people fly homemade kites on Easter to symbolize Christ rising from the dead.

Have a water fight

Slovakia, Poland, and the Czech Republic had a complicated Easter tradition involving men symbolically whipping women they like; the women get their revenge by pouring a bucket of cold water over the men. These days, though, the tradition has devolved into a daylong water fight. What this might have to do with Easter is unclear, but if it's warm enough where you live, it might be a fun way to cool off after your Easter egg races.

What to eat during Easter

Sweet and savory breads

The Church offers as an alternative to the second reading for Easter Sunday this text from 1 Corinthians 5:6-8:

Brothers and sisters: Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

This might be the inspiration behind the widespread tradition of making sweet breads to eat on Easter. Traditional sweet breads include simnel cake, a light, toasted fruit cake with two layers of almond paste or marzipan, common to Britain and Ireland; potica and other nut rolls; and in Bulgaria and Romania, cozonac, a variation on a sweet bread with raisins commonly eaten throughout Europe on Easter.

For something a little more savory, try the Jamaican Easter bun.

Fish for breakfast

In today's Gospel, the resurrected Jesus invites the startled apostles to "come have breakfast," treating them to a breakfast of fish and bread cooked over the coals of a hot fire.

Read or retell the Gospel story (John 21:1-14) over breakfast. If your kids like fish, serve fish with their breakfast (fish sticks might do).

If your kids are not fans of fish, make fish-shaped waffles or pancakes to accompany your story. If you're really ambitious, get a special fish-shaped waffle pan for making taiyaki, a Japanese delicacy in which a fish-shaped waffle is filled with a sweet red bean paste, fruit, creme, or other fillings.

Pray your way through Easter

Read the Resurrection narratives this week

During the Octave of Easter, the Scripture readings for Mass focus on the Resurrection narratives. Try reading the daily Scripture readings every day this week so that your kids can hear a wide variety of resurrection narratives. Here are eight readings along with discussion questions to review with your kids.

What are some common features of the different stories? Point out to your kids that Jesus always appears to his friends, not to the general public; the people to whom he appears often don't recognize him at first; and although he can appear and disappear at will, he has a real body, which he demonstrates by showing the apostles his wounds and eating with them.

Teens, precocious older kids, and parents might be interested in Jesuit Father Felix Just's web page on the Resurrection in the New Testament. Besides providing extensive background on the Resurrection, he also provides a chart comparing the accounts and questions for reflection.

Bless your Easter meal

The USCCB's *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* contains a special blessing for the first meal eaten after the Easter vigil, following a widespread tradition in Slovak countries. If you don't have a copy of *Household Blessings*, you can learn more about the practice, and find an older version of the blessing, at Catholic Culture.

Change your prayer table for Easter and set out holy water

If you keep a prayer table in your home, be sure to change it up for Easter. Here are some ideas:

- Change the covering to white (or gold) for the duration of Easter.
- Set out a picture of the Resurrected Christ.
- Purchase an Easter lily (they're usually discounted after Easter).

- Get some holy water from your parish and set out a bowl of it on the table, and use it to bless your kids during family prayer.
- Make a Paschal candle for your prayer table.
- Bring out the bells! Bells are traditionally rung to celebrate Easter in many European countries.

You might also put holy water out by the doors of your home during the Easter season. If you do, explain to your kids the connection between holy water, baptism, and the Resurrection.