

What is Pentecost?



On Pentecost Sunday, we remember the day the disciples received the Holy Spirit in a special way. The story in Acts 2 describes a powerful wind and tongues of fire as the Holy Spirit was poured out on people from all over the world who came to Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish feast. At the first Pentecost over 3000 people were baptized, creating the first church. This is why Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Christian church.

The word Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning fiftieth. The Jewish Festival of Pentecost (called *Shavuot*, meaning “weeks”

in Hebrew) falls on the 50th day after the original Passover. On that day, God gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Christian festival of Pentecost falls on the 50th day after the resurrection of Jesus.

Pentecost for Christians culminates the celebration and work of the Church begun on Easter Day.

The Season after Pentecost is the time of the church year to support new disciples and the whole congregation in living out the gifts we have been given in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.



Easter question answer: D

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“This extended season gives us time to rejoice and experience what it means when we say Christ is risen.”

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Interesting Facts about Easter

It's officially the season of Easter. Let's dive into some facts about this season.

The week before Easter, you may have celebrated Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

What is Maundy Thursday?

Maundy Thursday is an alternate name for Holy Thursday, the first of the three days of solemn remembrance of the events leading up to and immediately following the crucifixion of Jesus. The English word "Maundy" comes from the Latin *mandatum*, which means "commandment." As recorded in John's gospel, on his last night before his betrayal and arrest, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and then gave them a new commandment to love one another as he had loved them (John 13:34). This is why services on this night generally include the washing of feet or other acts of physical care as an integral part of the celebration.

While John's gospel does not record the institution of the Lord's Supper among the events of this night, the other gospels do. Christians therefore keep this night with celebrations both at the basin (footwashing) and at the Lord's Table (Holy Communion).

Where did Good Friday get its name?

The source of our term for the Friday before Easter, "Good

Friday," is not clear. It may be a corruption of the English phrase "God's Friday," according to Professor Laurence Hull Stookey in *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church* (p. 96). It is the common name for the day among English- and Dutch-speaking people. It is a day that proclaims God's purpose of loving and redeeming the world through the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is a day that is good because God was drawing the world to God's self in Christ. As seen in John's gospel, particularly, God was in control. God was not making the best of a bad situation but was working out God's intention for the world — winning salvation for all people. We call it "good" because we look backward at the crucifixion through the lens of Easter.

What is Holy Saturday?

Holy Saturday, the day after Good Friday, is meant to be a day of quiet reflection between the tragic events of Good Friday and the great joy of Easter.

This is the silence of the tomb, or perhaps more accurately, the silence *from* the tomb. This is the silence that grabs us, if we are paying attention at all, when we contemplate the aftermath of the crucifixion.

This is what Holy Saturday has been about for centuries in the liturgical life of the Church. It is this silence, embodied in an assembly.

It is the ultimate silence. The horror of the execution and our role in it was the day before. Facing the violence head on as we do and must on Good Friday also tends to move us into a kind of alternate reality removed from the usual patterns of our lives and thoughts. We can be tricked into thinking it was all just a horrible dream.

But on this day, on Holy Saturday, there is no question left. There was real horror. And the real horror took its real toll. Jesus is dead, buried in a tomb. On Holy Saturday, this reality sinks in.

And so on this day we gather in that silence. Everything we say or do in liturgy springs from that silence and returns to it. *That* silence-- crushing, undeniable, and at times unspeakable.

Remember, Easter is not just one day, it's 50 days.

Easter for Christians is not just one day, but rather a 50-day period. The season of Easter, or Eastertide, begins at sunset on the eve of Easter (Saturday, April 16,

this year) and ends on Pentecost (which is Sunday, June 5, this year), the day we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church (see Acts 2).

Easter is also more than just an extended celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. In the early church, Lent was a season for new converts to learn about the faith and prepare for baptism on Easter Sunday. The initial purpose of the 50-day Easter season was to continue the faith formation of new Christians.

This extended season gives us time to rejoice and experience what it means when we say Christ is risen. It's the season when we remember our baptisms and how through this sacrament we are, according to the liturgy, "incorporated into Christ's mighty acts of salvation." As "Easter people," we also celebrate and ponder the birth of the Church and gifts of the Spirit (Pentecost), and how we are to live as faithful disciples of Christ.

Test your Easter knowledge:

Why are eggs associated with Easter?

- A. They symbolize new life.
- B. They have a shell around the body inside, just as the tomb was around Jesus' body and then was cracked open.
- C. They can be dyed pretty colors to represent joy, just as we have joy that Jesus has risen.
- D. All of the above.
- E. None of the above.

