

Early Eastertime

Wednesday, April 27
to Friday, May 20



Early Eastertime 2011

Looking Ahead

About the Season

Christ is risen! Alleluia! Lent has given way to Easter. Christians in the West and Orthodox Christians the world over celebrated Easter Day on 24 April. We can now rejoice in the glory of Jesus and the share he has given us in his resurrection. And so we sing over and over, 'Alleluia'.

Easter is not just one day. It is a whole season of 50 days which will last until Pentecost. We take even longer to celebrate Easter than we took during Lent to prepare for it.

Eastertime is about new life. We rejoice in the new life of Jesus. We rejoice that members of our parish were baptised and confirmed at the Easter Vigil. We rejoice that all of us are nourished by the life of God whenever we share in the Easter sacrament of the eucharist.

Eastertime is also about light overcoming darkness. At the Easter Vigil, the paschal candle was lit from the Easter fire and carried into the darkened church. The church sang 'The light of Christ' and responded, 'Thanks be to God.' This new paschal light will burn brightly for the 50 days of Easter. It is a symbol of the risen Jesus, the 'Light of the world', whose light was not put out with death but shines now for all believers to see.

There are many other times during the year when we speak of Jesus as the 'Light of the world.' During Advent we light candles on an Advent wreath to show that the Saviour brings God's light into the world's darkness. During Christmastime we read about Simeon who called Jesus the 'light of revelation,' and so we use lights and candles to celebrate the coming

of Christ. We put lights on trees, inside and outside our homes.

The sun rises each morning, bright and strong, and is a constant reminder of the resurrection of Jesus. The sun has always been recognised as a sign of God's warmth, love and life-giving power. Even in these days of autumn as our days are getting shorter, we can still appreciate the warmth of the sun. Often during autumn we enjoy what we call an 'Indian Summer' with sunny days, clear blue skies and the crisp brightness of the stars at night.

The daily readings during Eastertime are filled with good news. They tell of the women and Peter who find the tomb of Jesus empty. We hear of excited disciples running to tell one another of the risen Jesus, of Jesus travelling along the road to the town of Emmaus and meeting up with two disheartened followers. At first when Jesus joins them, they do not recognise him. But then Jesus opens up the words of the Scriptures to help them understand. Jesus blesses and breaks bread, and he gives it to his disciples to eat. It is only then that they recognise him – they know him because of these familiar actions. We hear the message that Jesus is the shepherd who cares for his sheep. All of our readings proclaim that, in Christ, life has conquered death; light has triumphed over darkness.

Preparation for Early Eastertime

Make copies of the Psalm, Meal and End of the Day Prayers for Early Eastertime (pages 100 to 102) for each member of the class. Copy them on bright yellow or gold paper.

The first thing to do after Easter break is to make our prayers ring with 'Alleluias'. This can be done with joyful singing and lots of music. Use some instruments when you sing your prayer such as guitars, rhythm sticks, finger cymbals, drums and tambourines.

Drape the table in the prayer space in festive gold or white. Two important Easter symbols are water and light. We can place a bowl of Easter water and a special Easter candle on the table. The water can be used for sprinkling and signing to remind us of our baptism. The Daily, Weekly and End of the Day Prayers tell us when to light this candle and when to put it out. These are all ways to make the classroom 'sing' of the resurrection. Perhaps some of your class celebrated the Easter sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist. If so, it is important that we share in their joy. We can make special remembrance of them in our prayers of intercession.

Earth Day occurs April 22. There is a Prayer for the Earth on Earth Day on pages 370-371.

Anzac Day occurs on 25 April, the day after Easter Sunday. On this day we remember all Australians and New Zealanders who have died in war. A prayer for Anzac Day is provided on pages 104 to 105. We pray that nations will not continue to war with each other. Preparation is needed for this prayer, so leave time for this.

If your families used the prayers you may have taken home during Lent, they might like to continue to pray together throughout Eastertime. The Psalm for Early Eastertime, the Meal and End of the Day prayers (pages 100-102) can be copied and taken home.

Suggested Hymns

'O sons and daughters' (GA, 359) is a beautiful Easter carol from France. Remember that carols are songs for dancing and are so much fun to sing. They can make you want to move your feet to their rhythm. Another Easter song to the same melody is 'Easter Alleluia' (GA, 358). 'Christ be our light' (GA, 404), 'This day was made by the Lord' (GA, 356) and 'Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks' (GA, 360) ring with the joy of Easter.

During Easter, sing alleluia whenever you can. The 'Celtic Alleluia' (GA, 141) and 'Halle, Halle, Halle' (GA, 107) are both very joyful.

For Groups that Gather Weekly

The Psalm for Early Eastertime is on page 100. Make a copy for each member of the class.

The reading for Weekly Prayer for the second Sunday of Easter is from the gospel of John. It tells the story of the faith of Thomas. On the Third Sunday of Easter we hear the story of the apostles who meet Jesus on their way to Emmaus. Then on the Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Easter we hear about Jesus as the shepherd and gatekeeper, and his promise that there are many rooms in his father's house.

If some members of the group were baptised or received into the church at Easter, it is important for us to share their joy. We can make special remembrance of them in our prayers of intercession.

If your families used the Psalm you may have taken home during Lent, they might like to continue to pray together throughout Eastertime. The Psalm for Early Eastertime is on page 100. There are also Meal and End of the Day Prayers on pages 101-102 which can be copied and taken home.

A Psalm For Early Eastertime

Psalm 118:1-2, 5, 14, 22-23



LEADER

Christ is risen like the sun, alleluia!

ALL

The light of Christ shines
over the whole world, alleluia!

[Light a candle, and then say:]

LEADER

This is the day the Lord made.

ALL

Let us rejoice and be glad.

SIDE A

Tell the Lord how thankful you are,
because he is kind and always merciful.
Let Israel shout, "God is always merciful!"

SIDE B

When I was really hurting
I prayed to the Lord.
The Lord answered my prayer
and took my worries away.

SIDE A

My power and my strength
come from the Lord
and he saved me.

SIDE B

The stone that the builders tossed aside
has now become the most important stone.
The Lord has done this,
and it is amazing to us.

LEADER

This is the day the Lord made.

ALL

Let us rejoice and be glad.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be
world without end. **Amen.** Alleluia.

[Turn back to Daily Prayer for today.]

Early Eastertime Meal Prayer



LEADER

Let us offer God praise and thanksgiving.

✠ All make the Sign of the Cross.

LEADER

Christ is risen, alleluia!

ALL

Christ is truly risen, alleluia!

LEADER

Jesus says to us: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever."

ALL

Loving God, give us the daily bread that is your Son, Jesus, who is our resurrection and our life, now and forever. Amen.

The tune for the following words is 'I am the bread of life' (GA, 204).

ALL

I am the Bread of life.

You who come to me shall not hunger
and who believe in me shall not thirst.
No one can come to me
unless the Father beckons.

And I will raise you up,
and I will raise you up,
and I will raise you up
on the last day.

✠ All make the Sign of the Cross.