

NATIONAL COLLEGE BARBU STIRBEI CALARASI

PROIECT COMENIUS

Romanian Easter - Customs and Traditions



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“Expanding boundaries” - COMENIUS Project

Edited by students from 7th grade

Assisted by

Cornelia Ioniță, Petronela Blebea, Sabina Blebea

and

Marinela Dincă, *COMENIUS Co-ordinator Project*

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ROMANIAN EASTER

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Easter (Rom. Paște) is the principal festival of the Christian Church Year, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion. Its origins go back to the beginnings of Christianity, and it is probably the oldest Christian observance after Sunday, which came to be regarded as the weekly celebration of the Resurrection.

Western Christians celebrates Easter on the first Sunday after the full moon (the paschal moon) that occurs upon or the next after the vernal equinox. This rule was fixed after much controversy and uncertainty, which lasted in various parts of the church down to the 8th century.

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In the Eastern Orthodox Church, however, a slightly different calculation is followed (Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon, after the vernal equinox), with the result that the Orthodox Easter, although sometimes coinciding with that of the West, can fall one, four, or five weeks later (like this year!).

The festival of Easter occurs on a particular Sunday, but importance is emphasized in the worship of the church by the long preparation of the Lent; by Holy Week, with its solemn services; and by the following fifty days until Pentecost (Rom. cincizecime).

Easter is central to the whole Christian year; not only does the entire ecclesiastical calendar of movable feasts depend upon its date but the whole



its

Since when do the Romanians *coloured eggs?*

We don't know the correct answer but, naturally our ancestors had this custom since old times. The oldest mention of this custom was found in Del Chiaro's memories, an Italian historian who described the Easter customs at the Royal Court in Bucharest, when the king (Rom. domnitor) was Constantin Brâncoveanu (1689-1714).

Del Chiaro told that the Queen had a reception on Easter Day when she housed the priests, to whom she kissed their hands and gave them nice scarfs embroidered, and also she housed the local gentry giving them nice painted eggs: "bizzaramente lavorate a fiori di oro".

Even today the Romanian women are unsurpassed on the art of painting eggs; sometimes they use seven colours to paint a single egg.

Written by: student **Andrei Mitea**

An Easter Relish

The Lamb

The most appreciate meal on Easter table is probably the lamb. Every Romanian wants to get as Easter meal roast-lamb, sour lamb and *drob*. This last dish, *drob*, is cooked using the lamb liver, kidneys, heart, and a lot of greens: onion, garlic, parsley, dill.

In our country and Church it is customary to have those foods which were prohibited during the Lent blessed by the priests before eating them on Easter day, especially meat, eggs, cheese, fish. Those who ate before the food was blessed, according to popular belief, will be punished by God.

Made by: student ***Cristina Gheorghe***

liturgical year of worship is arranged around it. In the liturgical texts the emphasis is laid on its being the time of redemption.

Among the Eastern Orthodox, and especially Romanian Orthodox, even greater emphasis is laid on the central position of Easter not only as an annual observance of the church year but it is as a centerpiece in the whole worship and spiritual life of the church. The vigil is preceded by a procession outside the church representing a fruitless search for the body of Christ. Then comes the joyful announcement, "Christ is risen" (Rom. "Hristos a înviat"), followed by the Easter Eucharist.



When the procession leaves, the church is dark; but on its return hundreds of candles and coloured lamps is lighted to show the splendor of Christ's Resurrection.

Popular customs

Easter eggs



Around the Christian observance of Easter as the climax of the liturgical drama of Holy Week (Rom. Săptămâna Patimilor) and Good Friday (Rom. Vinerea Mare), folk customs have collected, many of which have been handed down from the ancient ceremonial and symbolism of European and Middle Eastern pagan spring festivals brought into relation with the resurrection theme.

These customs have taken a variety of forms, in which, for example, eggs, formerly forbidden to be eaten during Lent, have been very prominent as symbols of new life and resurrection. They are brought to the table on the Easter Day, coloured red to

Another superstition says: "When the boys and the girls have returned from the holy service, on the Easter morning, they might look in a draw-well to be nice and clear like the water, all over the year.

There were many other superstitions for the Easter Sunday but today they were forgotten.

Written by: student **Alex Mitulescu**



Old customs and superstitions

On Easter Sunday morning we have to put a red egg and a silver coin in the water we use to wash our face. Rubbing the cheeks with the egg everybody says: "I'll be healthy and my cheek will be red like the egg; I'll be loved like red eggs on Easter Day". Then holding the silver coin in the hand we will say: "I'll be proud and clean like the silver".

The girls thought that they will have a soft skin if they rub the cheeks with a red egg.

A spread superstition is connected by the salt. The one, who take salt on his/her hand on Easter Day, will have wet hands all the year. This could be an inconvenient to the work. So, to be forbidden by



this shortcoming when we come back from the church, on Easter morning first we might put the hand on the door-handle and we might say: "My hands will be cold and dry

like the iron!"

symbolize the Easter joy. The symbolic meaning of a new creation of a mankind by Jesus risen from the dead was an invention of later times. The custom may have its origin in paganism, on that pagan customs celebrating the return of spring. The egg is the emblem of the germinating life of early spring. Easter eggs are used by children in a sort of game which consists in testing the strength of the shells. When they knock the eggs one says: "Christ is raised" and the other answer: "He is truly raised".

In Romania, especially in the villages, on Wednesday, in the fourth week of the Lent, the women count the eggs from the nest and they start to keep the eggs for the Easter cakes and for colouring them. That Wednesday was called in folk tradition "Miezul - pãrezii" that could mean "the middle of the Lent".

*Made by student **Ana-Maria Ifrim***

The Easter and the Easter Eggs

As a symbol of creation, of beginning of life, the egg have inspired, from ancient times, numerous legends, fairy-tales, and an entire literature. In the Romanian culture it is sufficient to mention to outstanding representants: Constantin Brâncuși and Ion Barbu, whose works orbit around this subject, considered to have perfect geometrical form-the perfect object.

The origin of egg-painting is lost in the darkness of the pre-Christian era, when the New Year was celebrated at the vernal equinox.

The Romans used red-painted eggs as gifts on celebrating Janus and they were used in different games and religious ceremonies.



Paștele

Astăzi este o zi mare
Este-o zi de sărbătoare
Se vopsesc ouăle roși
Se coc cozonaci pufoși.
Peste tot se văd copii
Se-aud râsete zglobii
Vom ciocni ouă-ntre noi
Mai posaci sau mai vioi
Și vom spune neapărat
Azi Hristos a înviat!

Made by: student ***Geambazu Laura***

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what were they doing in the church: "We don't know for sure what we are doing here, but we are having fun!"

I put a rhetorical question: "what could be fun in a solemn procession?" because at midnight the candles are lit, the doors of the altar are opened and a solemn procession is beginning with priest's words: "Come and get the Light!".

Whilst the procession moved from the altar to the door, a beautiful psalm was sung. After this procession the priest says: "Christ is raised" and the people answer: "He is truly raised"; and these words are the Romanians' greeting during the entire time from Easter to Pentecost.

Written by: student ***Oana Tănase***



The custom of the egg painting was transmitted to the

Christians and is still used especially by the peoples of Europe and Asia. As opposed to other European countries, where this custom restrained or vanished, in Romania it flourished, reaching the tops of



art by the technique, materials, significance of the motives and the perfection of achievement.

In Romania the painted eggs represent a proof of the tradition, beliefs and Easter customs being placed among the elements of great folk spiritual cultural value, which define the ethnical peculiarities of our people.

The folklore presents several Christian legends which explain why the eggs are painted in red on Easter and why they became the symbol of the celebration of Christ's Resurrection.

The most wide-spread legend tells us about how Virgin Mary, who

came to mourn her crucified Son, laid the basket with eggs near the cross and they reddened because of the blood that was flowing from

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Jesus wounds. The Lord, seeing that the eggs reddened, said to those who were there:

"From now on, you too shall paint the eggs in red to remember my crucifixion, as I did today".

Materials

- hen egg (traditional)
- vegetal colours
- bee wax



Tools

- goose feather
- "chisiță" (special tool, made of a thin metal pipe, with very small diameter; and pig hair is pulled through it) is used for "writing" the motive
- brush (a tool that is used for covering the larger spaces - thick lines, points etc.)

◇ On Palm Day it is forbidden to seed or plant trees or vegetables, because it is possible to do flowers not fruits.

◇ Even that the Palm Day is on Lent, it is permitted to eat fish. Everybody eat fish.

Made by: student **Alexandra Lazar**

The Resurrection Night

Because the church service of Resurrection is at 12 P.M. (at midnight) we go at the church during the night. If we have in our families children, we should take them with us, unless of course, they are too small. This way they have the chance to learn that we celebrate during that night the Resurrection of Jesus Christ after being crucified on the cross.

I would not have written this if I hadn't been surprised by the answer given by some youngsters to a reporter when he asked

Palm Sunday customs

- ◇ Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday (Rom. Duminica Floriilor), which recalls Jesus entry into Jerusalem when the people covered the road with palm leaves to celebrate his arrival.

In Romania the palm leaves were replaced by willow twigs. In Romanian churches, the priests offer to the believers these twigs and they keep them in their houses, upon the icons. People believe that these twigs keep the harm out of their home.

Also, when the sky is covered by storm-clouds, ones throw on fire the willow-twigs to avoid the thunders and the lightings.

- ◇ On this day we celebrate people named Florin, Florina, Florentina or named after flowers: Narcis, Camelia, Viorica, etc.
- ◇ Don't forget to greet all the persons you know with a flower name, on Palm Day; we can write them or we can send a bunch of flowers.
- ◇ In Romania, on Palm Day, the girls plant flowers for good luck.

(Vegetal) Colours

- obtain from sweet apple peel, sweet apple leaves and flowers, hip rose peel etc.

Written by students: ***Vasile Veronica & Saulea Maria***



Easter rabbit

The hare, the symbol of fertility in ancient Egypt, is a symbol that was kept later in Europe, but its place was taken by Easter rabbit, the symbol of fertility and periodicity, accredited with laying eggs in nests prepared for it at Easter, or with hiding them away for children to find.

Also, the rabbit gives the children sweets and new clothes; they will wear on Easter Day. I remember with great pleasure a pair of black shoes and a blue blouse that I have received last year on Easter.

The funniest thing on Easter is to wait anxiously for the presents left by the "BUNNY".

Written by student ***Evelina Arabagiu***



Legenda Paștelui

După-atâta căutare
După mare supărare
Irod marele-mpărat
Pe Iisus L-a capturat
Pe cruce L-a răstignit
Și Iisus a și murit.
Dar cum și în Crez s-a spus,
Bunul nostru domn Iisus
"A-nviat a treia zi"
Pe noi a ne mântui.

Made by: student ***Diana Iancu***

windows and the doors or they use them to heal illnesses, for exercise

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or spells.

On Palm Sunday there is a custom to clean the graves and the graveyards, branches of willow are put into the ground. The Palms represent a present for the dead people and a hymn for life and the joy of living.



Made by students: **Mihaela
Țintea & Cătălina Ghicu**

Revival of nature

PALM SUNDAY

The joy for spring arrival, when the sun power revives the whole nature torpid by the frozen weather, is marked on the popular calendar by Palm Sunday holiday, a week before the Orthodox Easter.



This year the Palm Sunday holiday is on 24th of April; the origin of this holiday is the old Roman holiday "Floralia",

dedicated to the Flowers and Spring Goddess - Flora. Later the Christians celebrated this day as the first day when Jesus came into Jerusalem.

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LAZARUS SATURDAY

According to the Christian tradition, before Palm Sunday it is the Lazarus' Saturday which means the revival of the Lazarus. Romanians celebrate a second Lazarus who was, according to the legend, a child who asked his mother to bake pies. She refused him kindly. The boy insisted grabbing his mother falling down into the spindle left down his mother. Little Lazarus died because of lust for pies.

Therefore, some areas of the country have the custom to bake pies and to give them to the poor people, especially to the children. Same day the girls between 6-12 ages walk with Lăzărița. They gather by 3-7 and the youngest girl and the most beautiful of them get dressed as a bride, and the other wear normal clothes. They go around the houses and set into a circle in front of the windows, and the bride walks through the others 2 steps ahead

and 2 behind. She doesn't speak, but the other girls named singers, start to sing monotonously the carol of Lăzărică. They receive presents, some eggs (symbol of revival of nature), and they put them into a sort of basket, named little basket.

PALM SUNDAY

There is a saying that the weather of Palm Sunday will be the same as the Easter. In the morning, groups of 4-5 boys "go by Palm ". They take willow branches into their hands, and go to people yards and sing a carol at the window. Afterwords they put few branches at the host window and they receive money and eggs.

In other areas of the country, people take out the amulet received on 1st March, and put it on hip roses or other blossom trees. Also, the clothes and the trousseau are taken an airing, and people do the cleaning for the Easter. People gather willow branches - symbol of fertility and revival nature - , and took them to the church to be blessed. Afterwords they adorn the icons, the