

“Our Christian faith is rich in symbolism, both ancient and modern. Easter, after our period of study and repentance, offers us every opportunity to share the Love of God in Jesus Christ and to share our joy that He is risen indeed!”

Easter Symbols

Do chocolate bunnies have anything to do with the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? No, not really. While rabbits have always been symbols of fertility, and this connects to themes of new life, the prevalence of chocolate bunnies is a bit of a stretch.

But we are teachers and teachers use what tools are in front of them. At this time of year, we are given baskets of chocolate to hunt for and eat, and new bonnets and clothes to wear.

Eggs

Eggs have been a part of Spring rituals since before recorded history. After the long winter, chickens and other birds started to lay eggs again, each egg bursting with new life, mirroring the entire season of Spring. Ancient people, like the Hutsuls of Ukraine, decorated eggs and gave them as gifts to special people in their lives. We follow these traditions when we hunt for eggs with our baskets and decorate them in beautiful colors and patterns.



Easter is the Church's time of new life, which connects beautifully with the ancient symbolism of the egg as a mysterious place of new birth. Furthermore, the egg image mirrors our Christian affirmation that Jesus died, was buried, and emerged from his tomb (just as a chick emerges from an egg).

In addition, eggs remind us of our Lenten fast, and our joyful breaking of that discipline on Resurrection Day. Again looking to historical practices, Thomas Aquinas told his congregants that during the Great Fast of Lent, not only would they not eat animal meat, they would also refrain from milk and eggs. Sugar was also forbidden during Lent. So indeed, those chocolate eggs in your basket are symbols of the great abundance of God's love - we are no longer fasting, we are full of joy!

The grass those eggs nestle in also remind us of new life, and vanquishing the dark entombment. We the hymn goes: "Now the green blade rises from the buried grain. Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain. Love lives again, that with the dead has been. Love is come again like wheat that springs up green."

Bonnets and other new clothes

Over time we've forgotten that new clothing represents our new lives in Christ. The tradition of new clothes for Easter goes all the way back to the early Church. New believers were baptized on the Easter Vigil and clothed in white to symbolize the purity of their souls washed clean of sin. Other Christians in the community also wore new clothing to represent

new life.

Today, we still baptize new members on the Easter Vigil, welcoming them to the household of God - reborn, made new in Jesus! Even without a baptism, we renew our own baptismal vows, a public declaration of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

Why hats? During times of scarcity, bonnets were cheaper to 'refresh' than to buy all new clothing!



Conclusion

Our Christian faith is rich in symbolism, both ancient and modern. Easter, after our period of study and repentance, offers us every opportunity to share the Love of God in Jesus Christ and to share our joy that He is risen indeed!

*Chocolate bunnies, meanwhile, don't have much to teach us about Christianity. They are good to eat, and always the first to go from my Easter basket, starting with the ears!

Charlotte Hand Greeson is thankful to share her passion for formation as a manager, editor, and writer for Building Faith. She is grateful for almost twenty years of Navy life, which has

exposed her to a variety of churches and formation styles. She lives in Alexandria, Virginia with her husband and two teenagers.

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