

Unsurprisingly the Pope leads the Easter celebrations in Italy, holding a huge service on Good Friday at St. Peter's Basilica where the Via Crucis, or Station of the Cross, is celebrated. During the service, a huge crucifix made out of burning torches is raised in the night sky. In Florence, Easter Sunday is marked by the Scoppio del Carro, a centuries-old custom in which a huge and elaborately designed antique wagon full of fireworks is set alight by a dove-shaped rocket after being hauled into a small square by oxen and hundreds of people in 15th century dress. Elsewhere in Italy over the course of the three days, religious processions are held in which people dress in ancient costumes and parade artefacts, statues and olive branches through main squares. One of the most popular foods on the peninsula during this period is the Colomba di Pasqua, a traditional cake which is similar to a panettone.

-Bernard Kellett

Entrance Antiphon: Cry out with joy to God, all the earth; O sing to the glory of his name. O render him glorious praise, alleluia.

First Reading: Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19

Responsorial Psalm: 4 Response: Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.

Second Reading: 1 John 2:1-5

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Lord Jesus, explain the scriptures to us. Make our hearts burn within us as you talk to us. Alleluia!



Gospel: Luke 24: 35-48

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: The disciples recognized the Lord Jesus in the breaking of the bread, alleluia.



Third Sunday of Easter, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly Reflection: Easter Around the World (2)

As in Spain, many of France's Easter customs stem from Catholic tradition and as such the holiday is usually a more religious

affair than the UK's. One such tradition dictates that church bells stop ringing around Easter as a mark of respect for Jesus' death, and to explain their silence children are told the bells have flown to Rome to be blessed by the Pope. On the morning of Easter Sunday - Jesus' resurrection - the bells then fly back to France loaded with sweet treats which they drop into gardens for the children. Once they are back in their steeples they then start ringing joyfully again.

So, in France it is the "cloches volantes" or "cloches de Pâques", and not the Easter bunny, which brings the Easter eggs. Once the bells have begun to ring, the Easter egg hunt - or "chasse aux oeufs" - begins. Traditional food revolves around lamb, cheese, potatoes, and chocolate. In the town of Bessières thousands of people gather on the Monday morning to make a giant omelette, usually consisting of 15,000 eggs and requiring 40 cooks. Good Friday and Easter Monday are both public holidays in Germany, and they celebrate by lighting bonfires around sunset on Holy Saturday. Some places have turned the "osterfeuer" (Easter bonfire) into mini festivals with stands selling sausages, wine and funfair rides while other communities stuff huge bales of straw into a wooden wheel, set it on fire and roll it down a hill (known as the Osterrad). Other traditions include decorating an "Easter tree" with hand painted eggs, known as the Osterieierbaum. Usually, families hang the ornaments from a small household tree, however you can hang them from bigger foliage in your garden. It is also traditional in Germany to eat something green on Maundy Thursday, which is called Gründonnerstag - or "green Thursday". Spiced, sweet bread, enriched with eggs and dairy and dotted with almonds, candied peel raisins are also popular during Easter for breakfast and afternoon tea.