

Session Eight: Symbols and Traditions for Pascha

Main Ideas: Over time, the Church has developed many traditions that add to the celebration of the Feast of Feasts

Supplies needed: Icon of the Resurrection, copies of pysanky coloring page from supplemental Materials, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) You may check the Leader Plan for ages 4-8 for an alternate egg decorating activity.

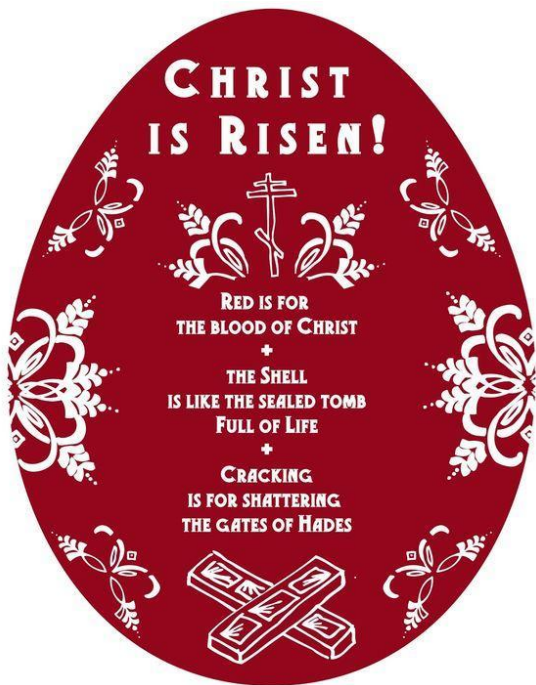
In addition to the services that walk us through the Resurrection, over time, Orthodox Christians have included many symbols and traditions to remember this holiest of all days. Let's take a look at a few, and you will have a chance to share your own!

The Easter Candle

Instead of blowing out your candle after the procession or after the services, many people try to keep the light from the candle going as long as possible. During the Paschal Matins we sing, "Now all things are filled with light..." Some families bring a small lantern so that they can protect the flame (and get it home safely in their car!). Once it is safely at home, some families make the



sign of the cross on the ceiling in front each doorway, asking God to protect everyone and everything that comes into their home. Another nice tradition is keeping the candle lit or relighting it each evening and singing, "Christ is Risen!" as the family sits down to dinner together.



Eggs!

There are many traditions and symbols connected to eggs. First, if a person has been keeping a strict fast, they won't have had eggs in many weeks. So they "break" the fast with something delicious! Eggs are also a symbol of new life because baby chicks are born out of them.

At the end of the Pascha services, the priest usually passes out eggs that have been dyed red. One story behind the red egg takes place soon after the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene was visiting the head of the Roman Empire- Emperor Tiberius Caesar. As she was telling the Emperor and the other guests about Jesus's Resurrection, he laughed at her and said there's no way that that could have happened. He joked that it was just as likely that the egg she was holding in her hands could turn red, and immediately it did!

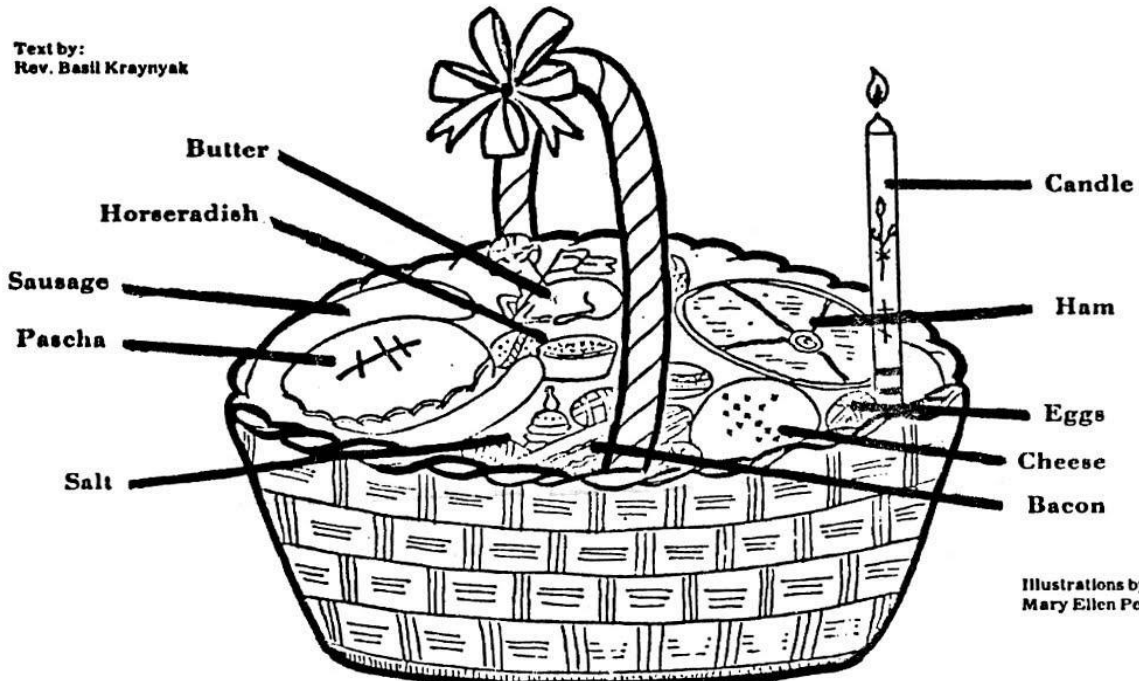
Another tradition connected to eggs are the beautiful hand decorated pysanky that are a Ukrainian cultural tradition. For centuries, farmers buried an egg in their field, hoping to have good crops in the coming year. People also buried the eggs in the grave with their loved ones who had passed away, hoping that just like baby chicks break through their egg, that the soul of their loved one would be freed after their death. Christ's resurrection means that we can all break from our shells and our souls can go to heaven.

Easter Baskets

Every family includes a unique combinations of items in their basket, but many include at least some of these traditional foods. Take a look at the diagram on the next page to learn more about what each food symbolizes (note some families may also have different names for different foods).

How to Put Together a Traditional Easter Basket

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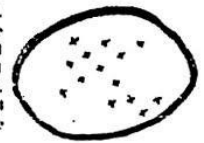


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Mary Ellen Petro

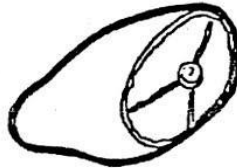


PASCHA - The Easter Bread (pron. pá-ska.) A sweet, yeast bread rich in eggs, butter, etc. Symbolic of Christ Himself who is our True Bread. Usually a round loaf baked with a golden crust decorated with a symbol indicative of Christ. Sometimes a cross (-) of dough is placed on top encircled by a plait giving it a crowned effect or Greek abbreviations for the name of Christ. The letters XB indicate the Slavonic for Christ is Risen.

CHEESE (Slav. Hrudka or Sirets pron. brood-ka or sí-rets) A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball having a rather bland but sweet taste indicative of the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, creamed cheese is placed in a small dish and both are decorated with symbols (see Pascha) out of cloves or pepper balls.



HAM (Slav Šunka - pron. shoon-ka.) The flesh meat popular with the Slavs as the main dish because of its richness and symbolic of the great joy and abundance of Easter. Some may prefer Lamb or Veal. This is usually well roasted or cooked as well as other meats so that the festivity of the day will not be burdened with preparation and all may enjoy the Feast.



BUTTER (Slav. Maslo pron. ma-slo) This favorite dairy product is shaped into a figure of a Lamb or small cross and decorated as the cheese. This reminds us of the goodness of Christ that we should have toward all things.

BACON (Slav. Stanina pron. sla-ni-na) A piece of uncooked bacon cured with spices. Symbolic of the overabundance of God's mercy to us.



SAUSAGE (SLAV. Kolbasi - pron. kol-bu-si) A spicy, garlicky sausage of pork products, indicative of God's favor and generosity.

EGGS (Slav. Pisanki pron. pi-sún-ki) Hard-boiled eggs brightly decorated with symbols and markings made with beeswax. Indicative of new life and resurrection.



SALT (Slav. Sol' pron. sol') A condiment necessary for flavor reminding the Christian of his duty to others.



HORSERADISH (Slav. Chrin pron. khrin) Horseradish mixed with grated red beets. Symbolic of the Passion of Christ still in our minds but sweetened with some sugar because of the Resurrection. A bitter-sweet red colored mixture reminds us of the sufferings of Christ.

These articles are placed in a wicker basket and a ribbon or bow is tied to the handle. A decorated candle is placed in the basket and is lit at the time of blessing. A linen cover usually embroidered with a picture of the Risen Christ or symbol with the words "Christ is Risen" is placed over the food when brought to the Church.

In some places a large Easter Bread (Pascha) is made and brought separately in a large linen cloth. If the origin of the people was from a wine growing area, a sweet wine may be brought.



Suggested Additional Activities:

-Consider presenting this Session at the beginning of one of the related Praxis sessions found later in this workbook. You may also want to present this Session on a separate day and end the Session by asking youth which of the traditions they would like to participate in- providing leadership opportunities for older youth.

-Another option to consider would be to ask youth to interview an older family member or member of the parish to find out how these traditions have been passed down to them from earlier generations.

-Ukrainian Pysanky- This could be done in a variety of ways. Supplies for making pysanky in the traditional method, as well as video tutorials and sample designs can be found online. Perhaps there are members of your parish who would be willing to serve as guest instructors and helpers. If time and resources don't allow, consider purchasing paper mache or craft eggs from a craft store or the internet and have students create designs with markers. Eggs could also be included in pascha baskets for shut ins of the parish.