

THE MONTH OF JOY

CONNECTING THE CONTINENTS



Ukrainian Decorated
Easter Eggs

JESUS, OUR EVERLASTING JOY!

What is your favorite part of the Easter holidays? Maybe it is Easter egg hunts, or delicious food, or a three-day weekend from school. In church, we like to have special worship services on Easter. People get dressed up in their nicest Sunday clothes, and there are often special songs and many guests. It is a joyful celebration!

Many times, all of these fun and beautiful things can lead us to forget the real reason for celebrating: Jesus Christ has risen from the dead!

The Source of True Joy

In Phillipians 4:4 Pauls tells us, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

God does not want us to rejoice only on birthdays and holidays - he wants us to rejoice always. This is not always easy.

What are some things that fill you with joy? Take a few minutes to make a short list (or small children can draw pictures). Then, take a look at your list - can any of these things keep you joyful all the time?

You will probably notice that most things on your list can only give you joy for a limited time. For example, ice cream is delicious and sweet, but it only takes a few minutes to eat it. It won't make you happy for a long time.

Even your family cannot keep you joyful all the time - often our family members hurt us or disappoint us.

If we are going to rejoice all of the time, we need something to rejoice in that is everlasting. It seems like Paul understood this - That's why he said to rejoice IN THE LORD always!

When Jesus died on the cross, he gave us forgiveness of sins for our whole life. When he rose from the dead, he gave us a hope that we too can be raised from the dead - and spend an eternity in heaven. These promises can give us joy every moment of every day if we let them!

Not only during the Easter holidays, but every day we can remember the great gift that God gave us in Jesus Christ, and be filled with "an inexpressible and glorious joy!" (1 Peter 1:8)

Easter Traditions in Europe

All over Europe, Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here are some interesting Easter traditions in different European countries:

Italy - In Italy, church bells ring joyfully during the year. But the bells stop ringing on the Thursday before Good Friday. They are silent for a few days while people remember the death of Jesus. On Easter Sunday morning, the bells ring out, telling people that Jesus is alive again. When people hear the bells, they kiss and hug one another.

France - An old French custom was a contest of rolling raw eggs down a gentle slope--the surviving egg was the victory egg and symbolized the stone being rolled away from the tomb.

Hungary - Easter Monday in Hungary was referred to as Ducking Monday. Now, boys sprinkle girls with perfume or perfumed water. They wish one another good luck. The girls must reward the boys who spray them by giving them coins or Easter eggs.

Ukraine - Ukrainians decorate eggs in a special way called Pysanky. They make beautiful designs with beeswax on eggs. Paska, traditional Easter bread, is prepared by the women. On Easter, people greet each other by saying "Heysoos Boskres" (Jesus is risen). The other replies "Va Istino Boskres" (Truly he is risen).

Mission Highlight: Vatican City

Did you know that Vatican City is actually a country? In fact, it is the smallest country in the world with a population of only 900 people and a size of only 0.17 square miles! This city/state is run by the Catholic Church, and its leader is the Pope. Vatican City is located in Italy, surrounded on all sides by the city of Rome. This makes Rome the center of Catholicism. Please pray that disciples can plant a church in Rome, Italy, and that many people will convert from Catholicism to become disciples of Jesus Christ!

St. Peter's Square in
Vatican City



DISCUSSION:

READ 1 PETER 1: 3-9

What has Jesus given us through his death and resurrection? When should we be joyful - only when things are going well or in hard times too? How can we be filled with joy every day?

ACTIVITY:

For the whole family:

Decorate Easter eggs together as a family. Then, give them as gifts to friends and family, reminding them of the joy and rebirth we have in Christ.

PLEASE PRAY:

Pray that you will be filled with joy as you remember Jesus this week - and that a church will soon come to Rome so that they, too, can experience the joy of knowing Christ!