

EASTER EDITION

FAMILIES ON THE EDGE



Ukrainian
"Pysansky" decorated
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)

UKRAINIAN CULTURE: EASTER

For many years under the Soviet Union, it was illegal for Ukrainians to believe in God. For most of the twentieth century, religious holidays such as Easter were not officially celebrated. However, many traditions have survived through these times. During the 1990's, religious holidays were re-added to the official Ukrainian calendar. Thanks be to God, that now disciples in Ukraine now have the freedom to worship God and celebrate Christ's death and resurrection during the Easter holidays!

Easter Traditions

- Paska is a traditional bread (cake) made at Easter time. Traditionally, the baker of the bread must keep her thoughts pure and the household must remain quiet for the bread to retain its fluffy texture while in the oven. It is customary to keep the baking of the paska strictly a family affair; neighbors or strangers are not permitted to enter the house while the paska is being prepared. The bread is eaten as part of the Easter feast.
- On Easter, people greet each other by saying "Heysoos Boskres" (Jesus is risen). The other replies "Va Istino Boskres" (Truly he is risen).

Pysanky - Ukrainian Easter Eggs

The history of pysanky goes many centuries. The egg was a part of traditional spring rituals and symbolized rebirth of nature, new hopes, and new life. When Christianity was adopted in Ukraine in 988 A.D. the tradition of decorating eggs became part of the Easter rituals.



The design and symbols used for decorating Easter eggs have been handed down from mothers to daughters for centuries. Everything had its special meaning: colors and their combinations, symbols and ornaments. In the past, even the right spiritual frame of mind was required in order for woman (only women were allowed to decorate eggs) to perform this mystical ritual.

Traditionally, large chicken eggs are used for decorating, but duck, goose and sometimes ostrich eggs are also common. Sometimes, hand carved or hand painted Easter eggs are also made of wood.

Decorated Easter eggs are still cherished in Ukraine as a link to ancient culture, but they are also special decorative art form which involves many talented artists and attracts collectors from around the world. These days, you can even find Ukrainian Easter eggs sold on Ebay!

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.

CHALLENGE:

Look up on the Internet how to make real "pysanky" Easter eggs. Try it out!

As always, remember the Ukrainian churches in your prayers.