

EASTER

Write a word in each gap to complete the text.

Easter is the 1) _____ important festival of the year for most Christians and a holiday 2) _____ many others.

The meaning of Easter

Easter is a Christian festival which marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For many Christians, Easter is a celebration of the triumph of life over death, 3) _____ a very important time of the year. Many non-Christians also have a holiday 4) _____ this time, so it is a popular time to travel or spend 5) _____ friends and family. We see lots of symbols of new life at Easter, especially eggs, chicks, flowers and rabbits. These symbols go 6) _____ to ancient pagan traditions which celebrated fertility, rebirth and new growth 7) _____ the long, winter months.

When it is celebrated

The dates of Easter change 8) _____ year to year, but it usually falls sometime 9) _____ the end of March and the end of April. In Western Christianity, Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring, 10) _____ starts on 21st March. The Eastern Orthodox churches, which use a different calendar, have a slightly different way of calculating Easter and usually celebrate Easter a little earlier 11) _____ later.

Holy Week

The week 12) _____ Easter is called Holy Week. The first day of Holy Week is Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday before Easter. Many Christians celebrate this 13) _____ the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem and people threw down branches from palm trees 14) _____ the road to welcome him. Four days later is Maundy Thursday, which marks the Last Supper, 15) _____ Jesus ate bread and drank wine with his twelve disciples. The following day is Good Friday, which is significant for Christians as the day that Jesus was put to death on the cross. Many Christians believe that Jesus 16) _____ killed and buried in a tomb on the Friday and that God raised him 17) _____ the dead on the Sunday. Therefore, Easter Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

How Easter is celebrated

In many countries 18) _____ are religious processions during Holy Week, and practising Christians attend special church services. On Palm Sunday, many churches bless palm branches and people put 19) _____ on the ground during processions to mark the day that Jesus arrived 20) _____ Jerusalem. The Last Supper on Maundy Thursday is celebrated in many Christian traditions in the form of the Communion, when believers share bread and wine. Good Friday is traditionally a day of fasting, reflection and sadness. A 21) _____ of church services start 22) _____ midnight the night before Easter Sunday with the lighting of candles or, in Greece, fireworks. This represents the triumph of light 23) _____ darkness. On Easter Sunday, churches are filled 24) _____ flowers representing new life, and at home chocolate Easter eggs are given as presents.

Other Easter traditions

There are many different Easter traditions around the world. In some places, people eat lamb 25) _____ Easter Sunday, but there are many other foods, 26) _____ as hot cross buns – spiced, sweet bread buns made with raisins – which are traditional in the UK.

In some places in Eastern Europe, boys and girls throw water at 27) _____ other, while in Corfu, Greece, there is a tradition of throwing pots and pans 28) _____ of windows and from balconies, breaking them on the street. In the United States, a tradition of wearing new clothes at Easter 29) _____ evolved into making Easter bonnets – fancy hats decorated with flowers, rabbits and other symbols of spring. For fans of crime fiction, Norway is the place to be at Easter, when it has become traditional to read crime novels and solve mysteries.

Eggs are a popular part of Easter celebrations. Traditionally, people paint chicken eggs and decorate them with bright colours to give as presents. Nowadays, chocolate eggs are more popular 30) _____ the traditional kind, especially with children. They are often hidden around the house and garden so that children can find them in an Easter egg hunt.