

THE EASTER SEASON

The 50-day period from Easter Sunday through Pentecost is celebrated as one great feast – the high point of our liturgical year. Alleluias are sung and repeated. The Easter Candle – symbol of the Risen Christ – is put in a prominent place the church sanctuary and is lit for all Masses. The joyful color white is used for vestments and sanctuary adornments. A traditional Christian dialogue is to greet someone with the proclamation, “Christ is risen!” to which the other replies, “Truly, He is risen!”

During the Sundays of Easter, both scripture readings before the Gospel are from the New Testament, rather than one from the Old Testament. The first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles, recounting the growth of the early Christian communities and their evangelizing witness to the Risen Christ. Weekday masses throughout the Easter Season also take their first scripture reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Except for Easter itself, the second scripture readings for the Sundays of Easter are from books not usually used:

- In the A Cycle (e.g., 2014), they are from the **First Letter of St. Peter**; his strong and steady witness to the saving action of Christ is an exemplary contrast to his denials of Jesus after the arrest in the garden.
- In the B Cycle, the second readings are from the **First Letter of St. John**, tender reminders of God’s love for us and encouragements for us to live in a way that reflects that love.
- In the C Cycle, the second readings are from the **Book of Revelation**, giving us visions of the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom and the glory of the Lamb of God ruling from his heavenly throne.

The Gospel readings for the Sundays of Easter illustrate specific topics each week:

- Each year on Easter, we hear an account of the Resurrection on that first Easter Sunday (usually from John, although another Gospel may be chosen; Matthew, Mark and Luke are used at the Easter Vigil for Years A, B, and C, respectively).
- The Second Sunday of Easter (designated as Divine Mercy Sunday by Pope St. John Paul II in 2000), has John’s account of the Risen Jesus commissioning the disciples to forgive sins, plus Thomas’ doubt and subsequent confession of faith.
- The Third Sunday of Easter features accounts from Luke or John of the Risen Lord’s appearances to his disciples.
- The Fourth Sunday of Easter presents passages from John 10, referring to Jesus as the Good Shepherd.
- The Gospels for the Fifth and Sixth Sundays of Easter are passages from John’s Last Supper narrative, in which Jesus counsels his disciples on their relationship to him and, through him, to the Father.
- The Seventh Sunday of Easter presents portions of Christ’s “priestly prayer” for his disciples from John 17, another part of the Last Supper narrative. Where the Ascension is celebrated this day (almost all U.S. dioceses outside the Northeast), these readings may be used on the preceding Sunday.