

Dear Friends,

Happy Easter! I hope this season in which we celebrate the rebirth of the Church is a truly joyful one for all of you.

Did you know that it is still appropriate to be saying "Happy Easter?" It is. We are in the Easter Season which ends on May 10, 2008 when we celebrate the feast of Pentecost. That means we still have five whole weeks of Easter yet to celebrate. Is that not the most exciting news you have heard all year?

Here are a few interesting facts about the Easter Season.

- Easter Week (From Easter Sunday to the Second Sunday of Easter) is known as the "Octave of Easter." The word octave means eight. An octave in music is a range of notes from low to high. One octave has eight notes. The eight days of Easter are seen as one octave. We do not look at the Octave of Easter as eight individual days, though. We see the Octave of Easter as one day.
- During the Easter Season we are encouraged to sprinkle the people with holy water during the Penitential Rite at Mass. We have been baptized into Christ. In the waters of baptism we die to sin and we are given a rebirth as members of the Body of Christ. This sprinkling rite emphasizes the powerful connection between Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection, and our own death to sin and rebirth as members of the Church.
- During the Easter season the color of the Church and the vestments the priest wears is white. This color denotes the joy and dignity of the eternal life we share with Christ, the Lamb of God who was sacrificed and poured out his blood, and yet continues to live on. We have been washed clean in the blood of the lamb and have been made pure in his loving mercy.

- We will celebrate the Ascension of the Lord the week before Pentecost. Not too long ago we always celebrated Ascension Thursday ten days before Pentecost, and it was always a holy day of obligation. Within the last ten years the Church decided to keep the Feast of the Ascension on the Sunday before Pentecost.

I share this information with you as an encouragement to keep in mind the reality of celebrating Easter. Our celebration of Easter does not end on the evening of Easter Sunday. Easter is not just one twenty-four hour period of time. Easter is the most important feast of the entire Church year and it lasts for fifty days. It would be great if we could all continue to celebrate Easter as joyfully, and with as much enthusiasm as we did on March 23, 2008. The Church asks us to celebrate Easter with lasting joy: a joy that reflects the eternal mystery of salvation. This mystery never ends. Why should we limit Easter to one twenty-four hour day?

Think about it.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel