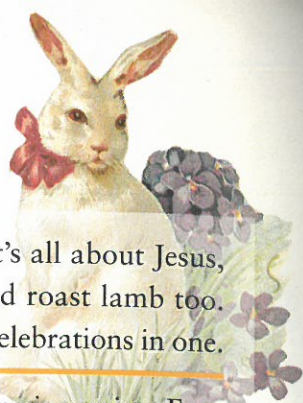


JESUS and the Easter Bunny



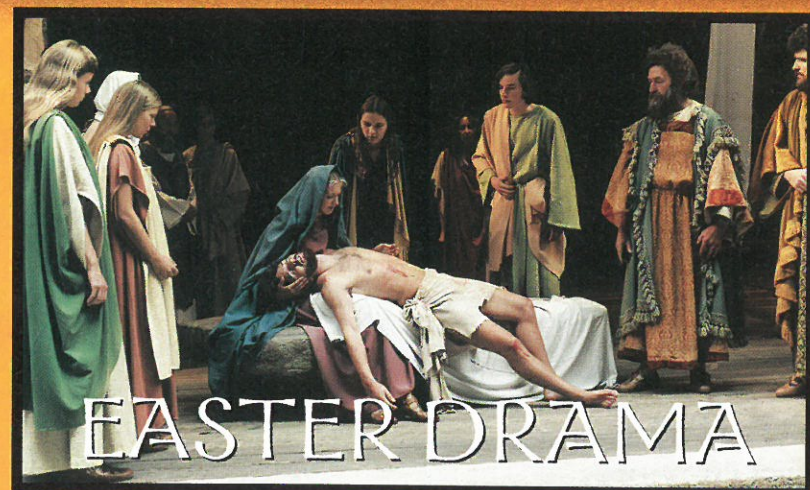
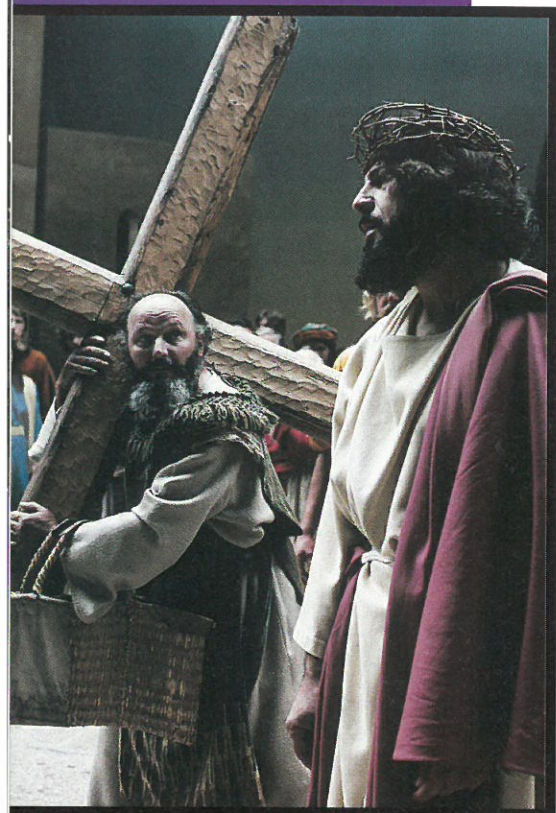
TRY TO EXPLAIN Easter to an outsider. Well, it's all about Jesus, chocolates, Easter bunnies, painted eggs ... oh, and roast lamb too. It sounds crazy. The problem is that Easter is three celebrations in one.

First ... it's a pagan festival. The winter is over, spring is coming. Eggs symbolise new life. And the rabbits? Well, everyone knows how fast rabbits make little rabbits. The name 'Easter' comes from Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of fertility.

Second ... it's a Jewish festival. Thousands of years ago the Jews wanted to leave Egypt. But the Egyptian Pharaoh would not let them go. So in the night God sent an angel to kill the oldest male child in every Egyptian family. The angel passed over the Jewish homes so the festival is called the Passover. Jewish families celebrate by eating lamb. That's why lamb is now an Easter food.

Third ... it's a Christian festival. It's the time when Jesus was crucified. And it's the time he came back from the dead. That's why people go to church at Easter.

So don't forget Easter. There are plenty of reasons for celebrating!



Easter week is the biggest event of the Christian year. The story:

PALM SUNDAY Jesus enters Jerusalem. Happy crowds put palm leaves on ground for his donkey to walk on.

MAUNDY THURSDAY Jesus has a last supper with his disciples. He tells them that one of them will betray him.

GOOD FRIDAY One disciple, Judas, betrays Jesus with a kiss. The kiss tells the Roman soldiers watching him who Jesus is. He gets thirty pieces of silver for his work. Jesus is crucified.

EASTER SUNDAY Mary goes to Jesus' tomb. It is open. He has come back from the dead.

GOOD FRIDAY?

When I was a boy I couldn't understand why Good Friday was called Good Friday. What was good about it?

So I asked the local priest. "Good Friday," he said, "is called Good Friday, because that's the day when Jesus was crucified."

That answer didn't help much. Painful Friday - yes. Hard Friday - OK. Long Friday - fine. But Good Friday? It didn't make sense.

Then years later I was tidying the attic. I found an old calendar belonging to my grandmother. On the Friday before Easter were the words: "God's Friday"! So simple. Good Friday has nothing to do with "good"! It just meant that the Friday was God's - a holy day.

I'm still waiting for someone to ask me why Good Friday is called Good Friday.

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT EGGS

• American Eggs •

Every Easter American children go to the White House. There is an egg-rolling competition on the White House lawn. They hope the president of the United States will be watching.

• Golden Eggs •

The most expensive eggs in the world are from Russia. Every Easter Czar Alexander gave his wife a special egg made out of platinum, gold and diamonds.

• Holy Eggs •

One story goes that Jesus' mother Mary came to the cross. She gave eggs to the soldiers and asked them not to be cruel to her son. She was crying and her tears fell on the eggs. When the tears touched the eggs they were spotted with many beautiful colours. That's why we still paint eggs today.

EGG HUMOUR

What did mummy egg say to her baby on its first Easter?
Don't get over-eggcited.

What did the King Egg say to the Bad Egg?
You are going to be eggsecuted.

What did the egg say to the whisk?
I know when I'm beaten.

How do you eat an egg without breaking its shell?
Ask someone else to break it.

What did the Headmaster Egg say to the Pupil Egg?
I'm going to eggspell you.

How do you drop an egg ten metres without breaking it?
Drop it eleven metres. It won't break for the first ten metres.



• Egg Magic •

Pregnant women in Rome used to carry an egg with them. They thought it would tell them whether their baby would be a girl or a boy.

• Egg Power •

Eggs make you strong. Body builders and boxers drink raw eggs before their training. Eggs have protein for building muscles.

• Sexy Eggs •

Eggs were a way to say "I love you!" Long ago, if you loved someone, you painted an egg and gave it to them - just like we do with Valentine's cards today.

• Ghost-buster Eggs •

How do you protect your house from ghosts? Easy. In the old days you put an egg under your house when you built it. Then you were safe from evil spirits.

• Cosmic Eggs •

Egyptians, Romans, Persians and the Chinese all believed the egg was a symbol of the universe. In the Finnish poem *Kalevala*, the world is made out of an egg. It breaks and the bottom part becomes the earth, the top part becomes the sky, the yolk becomes the sun and the white becomes the moon.