

# Nicolae Sfetcu

## EASTER CELEBRATION



*MultiMedia Publishing*

# Easter Celebration

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BOOK PREVIEW

## Easter



*Observed by Christians*

*Meaning: Commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ*

*Date 2014: April 20 (East and West)*

*Celebration: Vigil*

*Observances: Prayer, communion*

Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ laid down by the Bible, the third day after his passion. The solemnity begins on Easter Sunday, which for Catholics mark the end of fasting of Lent, and lasts for eight days (Easter week, or week or radiant, or week of eight Sundays).

“Passover”, from the popular Latin *pascua*, alteration (by influence of *pascua* “food”, the verb *pascere* “to feed”) of ecclesiastical Latin *Pascha*, from the Greek *πάσχα* / *páskha*, itself borrowed from the Hebrew *פסח* “he went [over],” where “path” is the name of the Jewish holiday that commemorates the exodus from Egypt. According to the Gospels, it is during this Jewish holiday that took place the resurrection of Jesus; that is why the name was taken to mean the Christian holiday.

The phrase “Orthodox Easter” is sometimes used to refer to this party when it is celebrated by the Orthodox on a date different from the date the Western Churches. Some languages distinguishes “the” original Passover and the Christian Easter. The first commemorates the exodus from Egypt by a ritual meal that is also called “the Passover.” The Christian holiday is manifold. It commemorates both the exodus from Egypt, the Eucharistic institution during the Passover meal, the crucifixion of Christ and rest in the tomb for three days, his resurrection passage from death to life, and the new creation inaugurated the third day.

There is also a Quartodecimanism practiced by some Christian churches: some religious groups, such as the Church of God (Seventh Day), some Seventh Day Baptists or Jehovah’s Witnesses, choose to perform the ceremony in accordance with the Jewish Passover.

## Date history



Easter is celebrated as the first feast in the Christian liturgical calendars; it is attested from the second century. It commemorates the Last Supper, the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, events of which the synoptic gospels locate the course during the celebrations of Passover in Jerusalem, Friday 15 Nisan on the Jewish calendar, while the gospel attributed to John considers the Jesus was crucified on a Friday 14 Nisan. The Easter was celebrated in different ways by the early Christian churches. Some of the early

Church continued to celebrate the Last Supper on the day of Passover, especially Syrian churches attached to the Johannine tradition that identified the sacrifice of Christ with the Paschal offering. Others, like the Church of Rome, celebrated Easter on the Sunday following Passover, thus focusing on the Resurrection after Shabbat. In 387, Epiphanius of Salamis demonstrates "the existence of two groups who were celebrating Easter on a fixed date: on one side those who follow the " Jewish myths ", the other a group that set in Cappadocia, celebrate Easter on 8 Kalends of April (25 March). "He said that these people claimed to have found the exact date of the crucifixion of Jesus in Christian sources. However, Epiphanes does not admit that date and indicates that other versions give 15 Kalends of April (March 18) or 10 of these calends (23 March). He added that according to his calculations, it is the 13th of April calends (20 March).

The Hebrew calendar is lunisolar, every month beginning with the New Moon; 14th of Nisan therefore generally corresponds to the Full Moon almost to the day (that is to say, the fourteenth after the new moon visible from Jerusalem closest to the equinox.). The year of the Jewish calendar has 12 or 13 lunar months; for Nisan remains the first month of spring, the intercalation of an additional month was decided by the Sanhedrin when it was necessary to respect the seasons. After the First Council of Nicaea in 325, it was decided to calculate the date of Easter following a fixed rule. Thus, "*Easter is the first Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon, the full moon that occurs on or soonest after 21 March (taken to be the date of the equinox)*" so the Sunday after the first full moon event during or after the spring equinox. A problem emerged later, is the difference in practice between Western churches and Orthodox churches. The first adopted in 1582 the Gregorian calendar to calculate the date of Easter, while others continue to use the original Julian calendar. The World Council of Churches proposed a reform of the method of determining the date of Easter at a summit in Aleppo (Syria) in 1997. This reform would have eliminated the differences in dates between Eastern and Western churches; she had come into force in 2001, but it failed.

Calculating the date of Easter is quite complex. It is known as computation. There are traditional tables, but also more mathematical algorithms to find it. The first method developed by Carl Friedrich Gauss had some errors: in 1954 (the formula given on April 25 instead of April 18) and in 1981 (April 26, instead of 19 April). Many other mathematicians have since developed other formulas.

Some religious groups choose to practice this ceremony in agreement with the Jewish Passover, that is to say, the day of the Quartodecimanism for the Church of God (Seventh Day) and some Seventh Day Baptists or the day of the Memorial Jehovah's Witnesses.



## Religious celebrations

### Catholic Church



*(Picture of the Resurrection of Christ by Dieric Bouts)*

Easter (also called *Easter Sunday*) is the most important solemnity (just before Christmas) of the Catholic Church, that is to say, it is mandatory to rest and to attend Mass. It is the first of the five cardinal feasts of the Catholic liturgical year.

In fact, the specific liturgy at Easter begins with the Easter Vigil, celebration also respected by some Anglicans and Lutherans. Often the Easter Vigil is an opportunity for believers to receive the sacrament of baptism or confirmation. Easter Sunday in the morning are thus igniting the new fire of the paschal candle, blessing of the baptistry, reading the prophecies and singing psalms. Normally, Easter is the day of the year chosen by all the faithful who go to Mass once a year to commune (hence the term "make his Easter"), which requires them to go confession beforehand. Since Holy Thursday, there was no Eucharist, only liturgical celebrations such as dubbed "Mass of the Presanctified"

on Friday. Symbolically, for Catholics, the Easter Vigil candle and reflect the Resurrection of Christ, the solemn renewal of their baptismal commitment by all Christians.

## About the author

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