

In whatever you do, uncover evidence of Easter. Search for signs of the Spirit, who has been sent to renew the face of the earth.

Copyright © 2001 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. Text by Peter Mazar. All rights reserved. Used with permission. Reprinted under OneLicense.net A-703473.

Celebrate the resurrection by planting a tree on Arbor Day. Give God glory that two ordinary pieces of wood have become a promise of paradise.

Wax

Easter time is the 50-day-long season from Easter Sunday until Pentecost, May 23 this year. Throughout this time the paschal candle shines in church. This candle is an image of the risen body of Christ. It was kindled and consecrated with great ceremony on Easter Eve.

When people are baptized into the church, they are given candles lit from the paschal candle. They are told to keep their lamps burning brightly throughout their lives. At funerals, the paschal candle shines on the dead, like a pillar of fire to guide them to the promised land.

A burning candle is a sign of self-sacrifice. It consumes itself in a blaze of glory. Traditionally, the church's candles are made from beeswax. A beehive is a symbol of the church, where everyone is called to work together for the common good.

Many households light a fine, fat candle every mealtime, and indeed, every time they gather to pray. It is a holy habit.

When you light a candle in prayer you might say, "Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light no darkness can extinguish." or say the words proclaimed at the Easter Vigil, "Light of Christ! Thanks be to God!"

Chrism

"Christening" is a wonderful, old word for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist. These are the three sacraments that initiate us into the church. To be christened is to be made a *Christianos*, a "new Christ."

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, God anointed him with the Holy Spirit. The word "Christ" means "anointed." The church anoints the baptized with chrism, which is oil mixed with perfume, as a sacramental sign of the outpouring of the Spirit.

St. Paul tells us that "we are the aroma of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:15). It is no wonder that the church uses the sense of smell in the worship of God. Fragrance can be invisible evidence.

In spring we often are surrounded with christening aromas wafting through our windows, of sweet lilacs and crab apples, of iris and peonies, of all the grace-filled scents and sights of the awakening land. Perhaps each morning in the shower, with simple water and scented soap, you can renew your christening.

Water, Wood, Wax and Chrism

Water

A glorious and lovely custom, the origins of the Easter bath date back a little more than a thousand years, from the time that large numbers of eastern Europeans first accepted Christianity and were baptized into the faith.

The custom takes many forms. It can be as sensuous as taking a warm, perfumed bath by candle light. And it can be as silly as tossing water balloons on the unsuspecting.

Water is precious to Christians. It reminds us of the rivers of paradise, the great flood and the Red Sea. In baptism we enter those waters to be created anew. In baptism we are led safely to freedom. Baptismal waters are like a tomb. In them we die, are buried and are raised with Christ. The waters are like a womb. In them we are reborn.

Throughout Eastertime, the 50 days from Easter until Pentecost, on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord each January and on the actual anniversary of your own celebration of the first sacrament, remember and renew your baptism. Ask parents and godparents what they can recollect about it. What mementoes can you find—your robe, candle or certificate?

Set a bowl brimming with water on the kitchen table. Morning and night, take some water on your fingertips and make the sign of the cross as a pledge of resurrection.

Wood

On Good Friday, two crisscrossed planks of lumber were carried into church. A voice sang out, "This is the wood of the cross, on which hung the savior of the world." And all of us gathered there to give glory to God by venerating this holy wood.

For us Christians, wood calls many things to mind: A cypress ark saved creation from the flood. Moses held high his walking stick to divide the sea. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, the boy carried the wood for his own funeral pyre. but God chose life, not death, for Abraham's beloved son.

There is a legend that the cross of Christ was hewn from Eden's long-dead tree of life. The blood of Christ brought this wood to life so that it flowered afresh.

In your home, honor the life-giving cross. Hang it in the place you pray. If you have no cross, a couple of branches would make a fine one. During the Easter Season keep some spring flowers alongside it.