

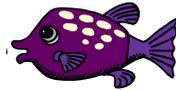
Which of these pictures do NOT remind people of Easter?

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The answer is NONE of them!

Because they ALL represent different traditions around the world that Christians use to celebrate Easter! Some of them are well-known in many different countries, but some represent very specific local customs and traditions associated with Easter. Try and match each of the following countries with the correct picture:

POLAND



1. chocolate fish

ENGLAND



2. cigarettes

DENMARK



3. blessing basket

FRANCE



4. teaser letter

GREECE



5. snowdrops

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



6. hot cross buns



7. flame of holy fire

Some Easter symbols like the bunny rabbit and traditions such as covering a cross with fresh flowers and decorating eggs are well-known in many countries around the world. Young children often hunt colored eggs that have been hidden in the grass, and receive gifts of special candy or chocolate as part of the Easter celebrations. These remind us of the wonderful gift of life that God gave us through Jesus' death and resurrection. But there are also other Easter traditions that you may have never heard of that are part of the celebrations in certain countries. I grew up in **England** and always looked forward to the spicy "hot cross buns" served on Good Friday - to remind us that Jesus died on the cross. At school we each had to make a decorated "Easter bonnet" - a hat that was decorated with flowers and Easter symbols - and then wear it to be judged in the Easter Bonnet Parade. We also used to have a very funny race called the "Egg and Spoon Race". Maybe you would like to try it with your friends! You will need one raw egg and one spoon for each person participating in the race. The contestants line up next to each other on a starting line with the egg placed in the spoon. The racer must balance the egg in the spoon, without using their free hand, and run to the designated finish line. If the egg drops but is not broken, the racer may pick up the egg, reposition it on the spoon and resume the race. The first person back to the finish with the egg still on the spoon wins!



Candy and chocolate eggs are eaten by many children around the world at Easter, but did you know that in **Russia** there are some very special Easter eggs that are worth about \$6,000,000 each?! In 1885 Russian Czar Alexander III commissioned Master Jeweler Peter Carl Fabergé to make a fabulously bejeweled Imperial Easter Egg as an Easter day surprise for his wife the Czarina. She loved the gift so much, the Czar commissioned 56 more - and each is now worth millions of \$!!

But in **France** fish and bells are also famous Easter symbols and so many children there eat chocolate fish! Also no church bell may sound from Good Friday until Easter Sunday in observance of Christ's silence in death. In **Greece**, Easter is the most sacred holiday of the Greek Orthodox Church which is a part of the Eastern Orthodox Church. On Saturday before Easter Sunday, the Orthodox Patriarch breaks the seal of the door of the tomb of Christ in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and emerges with the Holy Fire. The flame is then flown by Olympic Airways, accompanied by high-ranking priests and government officials to Athens airport where it is met by an honor guard and taken to a small church in the Plaka. From there the light is distributed to churches all over the rest of Greece. As the Saturday evening approaches, people gather in the church carrying with them unlit candles, and at midnight the priest announces the resurrection of Christ and lets the people light their candles from the Holy Flame.



The "blessing basket" is one of the unique Easter traditions in **Poland** and is prepared on Easter Saturday. It is filled with colored eggs, bread, cake, salt, paper and white colored sausages, and then taken to the church to be blessed before it is enjoyed by the family. In **Denmark**, "teaser letters" are a unique Easter tradition, written like little poems or rhymes and sent to a family member or friend. Teaser letters are usually anonymous, but signed with a number of dots corresponding to the number of letters in the sender's name, so that the recipient can make a calculated guess about the sender. The letter is often decorated with a snowdrop, which is regarded as the first flower of the year. If the receiver cannot guess the sender's identity within a certain period of time, the receiver will have to give an Easter Egg to the sender!

Finally, in **Papua New Guinea** in Asia, Christianity only arrived in the past century (100 years) and so the "new" Easter traditions have become blended with the old beliefs and are often very different. In the Trobriand Islands, Good Friday is regarded as the most important religious event in the year. About mid-morning a large number of people gather for a service in the settlement of Losuia, and the youth from surrounding villages present musicals and other items on an Easter theme. After the service is over, people divide into small groups of family and friends for feasts in various homes. On Easter Sunday another church service is held, at which there is the Easter Tree. At the front of the church is a small tree (or if they are unable to have a tree, several branches are tied together) on which sticks of tobacco and packets of cigarettes are hung! After the service, these are distributed amongst the congregation and the people then return to their homes for a feast of leftovers usually from the Friday feast.



But no matter what the Easter traditions are in YOUR community, the most important thing is to remember the story of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection - what a wonderful, inspiring story that is! You can read it in all four Gospels.

Did you know that the last NINE whole chapters of the Gospel of John (chapters 12-21) tell the events that happened in the final week Jesus was alive on the earth?



The story according to John also includes Jesus' last and most important teachings to his disciples, so it is very good for us all to read. But we know that many of you have difficulty getting a bible to read it for yourself, so this month we include with this PAL page a special Easter recipe and booklet that together tell the Easter story in a fun way. Hopefully your family or someone you know has an oven so that you could make these special little cookies to help tell the story.



Have a wonderful Easter and remember to thank Jesus for what He did for us all at that very special time!

'Til next time,

Your friend, Shirley

Answers: Poland - 3; England - 6; Denmark - 4 and 5; France - 1; Greece - 7; Papua New Guinea - 2

Facts from: www.festivals.iloveindia.com www.easterbunnys.net www.celebrations.com

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