

Easter

Easter does not end as the sun sets on Sunday. Rather, Easter Sunday begins the Octave of Easter. Each of these eight days is a solemnity, a continuation of the celebration of Easter. The Gospel readings assigned to these days focus on Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances. The eighth and final day of the Octave, the Second Sunday of Easter, is also called Divine Mercy Sunday. This observance, established by Blessed Pope John Paul II, "concentrates on the mercy poured forth in Christ's death and resurrection, fount of the Holy Spirit who forgives sins and restores joy at having been redeemed" (*Directory*, no. 154).

The celebration of Easter, the greatest feast of the Church, does not end in only eight days. "Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the 'Feast of feasts,' the 'Solemnity of solemnities'" (CCC, no. 1169). As such, the celebration of Easter extends for fifty days. "The fifty days from the Sunday of the Resurrection to Pentecost Sunday are celebrated in joy and exultation as one feast day, indeed as one 'great Sunday.' These are the days above all others in which the *Alleluia* is sung" (*Norms*, no. 22). In these fifty days, the time of mystagogy, the newly baptized and received reflect on the sacraments they have received. The first readings throughout the season of Easter are taken from the Acts of the Apostles, recounting the earliest days of the Church. The Gospel readings are taken from the Gospel of John.