

Fact of FAITH

Easter Is a Season

by Fr. Larry Rice

Most people think of Easter as a single day. It's never had the commercial appeal of Christmas, and because it's always on Sunday, most people don't get an additional day off from work. But for Catholics, Easter isn't just a day, it's a whole season. The Easter season actually stretches all the way to Pentecost, which falls on May 15 this year. Lent, which sometimes feels like it's stretching on forever, is actually forty days long. Easter, on the other hand, is all of fifty days long. About these fifty days theologian Nathan Mitchell writes:

The great fifty days of Pentecost are not an unwelcome, unrealistic obligation to “party on,” even if we don't feel like it, but an invitation to explore more deeply “the weather of the heart,” to awaken our memory of God's presence and power in our lives, to look more closely at all the rich and varied textures of creation.

One way the Church pursues this goal of seeing God present in the world is through the reading of the Acts of the Apostles. At Masses all through the Easter season, our usual practice of reading from the Old Testament is replaced by reading from the Acts of the Apostles. These readings tell the story of the Church's earliest days, and the beginnings of our faith's spreading throughout the ancient world. These stories of

heroism, controversies, persecutions, and miracles all testify to the continued presence of the Risen Christ in the world, through the lives of his disciples, and the actions of the Holy Spirit.



All of this should be an encouragement and a sign of hope for us today. Despite war, terrorism, violence, and an uncivil political atmosphere, God has not abandoned us, nor left us to our own devices. The risen Savior is still with us. These fifty days of Easter ask us to reflect on his presence, and—even in the face of danger or fear—to live with joy.

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