

Outward Signs of inner Grace

Washing & Cleaning - A sign of our Baptism

During Holy Week, give your house or car or garage a good Spring cleaning as an outward sign of an inward transformation: wash curtains, turn the mattress, drain the hot water heater, clean out the fridge, sort your files, clean off your desk top, put a new picture on your computer screen. Wash and iron something from your closet to wear on Easter. Since we celebrate Baptism in the Easter night, every sign of transformation and renewal, of the "washed self" and the refreshed spirit makes sense at this time. Inner and outer meet in a simple conscious action.

A Gathering of Symbols

Easter Fire

Find a sturdy thick bees' wax candle and set it on a stand. Decorate it with fresh ferns and flowers if you want. The candle holds light for us and in so doing gives up the life of its wax and wick. Watch how the room glows in candlelight. It flickers in the air currents and the little flame wavers and stretches as though it were pleading in our name to the God who made us. We light a candle because it seems the candle helps us pray-prays along with us. This Easter candle reminds you of the candle given to you at baptism. It is a miniature of the great Paschal candle in the church. From the Easter Vigil, bring home the Easter fire in a protected jar to light this candle. We watched as the priest lit a fire from flint and flew the tender flame into life. Fire is one of our oldest gifts and one we cannot, live without.

Easter Water

Find a beautiful little bottle with a lid or stopper. Bring it to the Easter Vigil and fill it with the Easter water which was blessed and used for baptism. Use this water to bless your ceremonial foods, to bless each other and keep it for times of need and thanksgiving.

Easter Bread

Bake a big round loaf of sweet bread filled with fruits and nuts to replace the "unleavened" bread of our Lenten fasts. You can bake it greased, tall tin so that the very shape of the loaf is high and tall: Resurrection bread. Surround it with eggs which you have dyed using red and yellow onionskins.

Easter Eggs

Take fresh, raw eggs and wet them with water. Take a collection of the dry papery skins of yellow and red onions that you collected from your produce man at the grocer and wet them down. With a square bit of hosiery, roll up the egg, surrounded by the wetted onionskins and wrap it tightly in fabric and tie both ends with twist-ties. If you want to press bits of ferns and flowers against the egg for a print of that plant, experiment with that too. Put all your little bundles of eggs into a large cooking pot. Cover with water and boil slowly until the eggs are hard. Pour off the water. Cover with cool water. Unwrap the bundling around each egg and be delighted and surprised at the marbled effect of the onionskins and the print made by flowers. With a drop of salad oil on a paper napkin, shine each egg and place the eggs around the Easter Bread or in a basket of real straw.

Easter Tree of Life

Pick budding branches in the garden pussy willow and flowers to make Easter bouquets to place around the house. Use a budding branch to make an Easter egg tree; from its branches,

tie eggs which you have blown out and decorated. Eggs are a symbol of the resurrection and new life. For days, the egg looks lifeless and useless and then one day, there is the breakthrough of new life. The little chick peeks its way out of the shell and rises out of the tomb which was its egg.

Easter Clothing

Let the little one's hunt for eggs and chocolates in the house or garden. Fresh new clothing or the traditional "Easter Bonnet" comes from our instinct to "put on Christ" as we put on the white garment of our baptism. You don't need to have a whole new outfit- but wear some sign of new life and fresh beginnings. Sport a happy tie, a flower on your lapel, new socks - whatever works for you and for the family. Help each family member put together their Easter clothes and remind them this is in memory of their baptismal vows, which we renew in the night of the Easter Vigil.

Easter Sound

Bells and glorious music return. Find a new CD of ancient sacred Easter music to play during brunch on Easter morning. Ring bells to wake the family that day and for the rest of Easter week. Someone in the Family is sure to be happy to be the bell ringer.

Easter Feast

The Easter Feast breaks the fasts of Lent. During the day we have a ham or roast lamb - our best foods are prepared. Gather friends and family and people from your parish who would love to be included in a gathering. Ask everyone to bring their favorite traditional foods.

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