

Area residents mark Easter holiday in various ways

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GODFREY - The most important day of the Christian calendar occurs on Easter Sunday. Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, three days after his crucifixion. Attending Mass on Easter is essential to Christians, because it is the holiest day on the calendar.

The date of Easter changes yearly, because it is based on a lunar calendar cycle, but it always occurs 40 days after Ash Wednesday. While it is the most sacred Christian tradition, many older pagan rituals and symbols of fertility are included in the celebration as carryovers from the Roman festival of springtime.

Rabbits and eggs are signs of fertility and coming life, which spring promises. Several Easter egg hunts were held across the Riverbend this weekend, and churches were packed with worshippers since the celebration of Holy Week, which culminated with Easter. Palm Sunday started the week, which observes Jesus returning to Jerusalem on the back of an ass.

Holy Thursday was an observation of Jesus's Last Supper, and Good Friday is a solemn reminder of his crucifixion. A late night Easter vigil is held on the Saturday before Easter Sunday.

Easter is also the end of Lent, which is the Christian season of sacrifice and atonement.