

Easter Food Blessing

The Blessing of Easter Food will take place on Holy Saturday, 19 April, at 10.30 a.m. in our church.

In the **Polish Roman Catholic tradition**, the blessing of Easter food, is a deeply rooted and beloved custom, taking place on **Holy Saturday morning**—the day before Easter Sunday. It is widely practised across Poland and among Polish communities abroad.

Historical Background of the Easter Food Blessing

At the turn of antiquity and the Middle Ages (7th–8th century), the blessing of food for the Easter table was closely linked to the Easter Vigil and the celebration of the Eucharist. The central and most symbolic food was the lamb, which represented the risen Christ. After the solemn liturgy, the lamb was shared among the faithful as part of a festive meal.

By the 9th century, the food blessing was separated from the Eucharistic liturgy to avoid confusion with the sacred elements of the Mass. Over time, it became a distinct ritual held before Easter, often on Holy Saturday, and sometimes even earlier. In rural areas, the blessing was performed not only in churches, but also outdoors—at wayside crosses, chapels, and even in homes.

This custom marked the joyful end of Lent, a season of strict fasting from meat, eggs, dairy, and rich foods. The blessed food was then shared during Easter breakfast or dinner as a sign of celebration and renewed life.

Key Elements of the Tradition:

1. The Basket (*Koszyczek wielkanocny*):

Families prepare a small, often ornately decorated basket filled with symbolic foods:

- **Eggs** (boiled, often colourfully painted): representing new life and Christ's resurrection.
- **Bread**: symbolizing Jesus, the Bread of Life.
- **Salt**: a sign of purity and preservation.
- **Sausage or meat**: representing God's abundance and the end of Lenten fasting.
- **Horseradish**: symbolizing the bitterness of Christ's Passion.
- **Cake** (often a small pound cake): a symbol of festivity and joy.

- **A lamb figure**, often made of **cake or sugar**, is also frequently included. It represents **Christ, the Paschal Lamb**, and echoes the early Christian tradition of blessing and sharing the Easter lamb after the Vigil.

1. 2. The Ritual:

- People bring their baskets to the church.
- A priest **blesses the food with holy water**, often accompanied by prayers and readings that highlight the **Paschal mystery**.
- The ritual includes singing and a brief reflection on the symbolism of the items.

3. Liturgical Context:

- Though the blessing is **not part of the official Holy Week liturgy in the post-conciliar Roman Rite**, it is deeply rooted in **centuries-old popular devotion**.
- It connects the domestic sphere (the Easter meal) with the liturgical celebration of the Resurrection.
- The blessed food is to be consumed the next day by all members of the family at the beginning of the solemn Easter Breakfast, which is a continuation of the Paschal liturgy within the home.

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