

Easter Symbols – taken from both the Biblical account and popular legends which grew around it

Anchor	The Christian symbol for hope and steadfastness (Hebrews chapter 6 verse 19) and notice how the shape of the anchor reflects the cross.
Bunny	See <u>hare</u> below. Believed to lay and hide Easter eggs.
Butterfly	Symbolizes the life cycle of Jesus and the Christian i.e. : the caterpillar stage represents natural earthly life; the cocoon represents death of the body; the butterfly emerging from the cocoon represents the resurrection.
Coins	30 pieces of silver represent Judas betraying Jesus.
Cross	Jesus was executed on the cross, which was a common form of punishment in the Roman Empire. This is the most well known of all Christian symbols.
Dice	The dice remind us of the soldiers who gambled for Jesus' clothes when he was crucified.
Donkey	The donkey received the cross-shaped patch of hair which grows on its back and shoulders when he carried Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.
Eagle	Believed to have life-restoring qualities like those of the <u>phoenix</u> . Symbolizes the rebirth of man in baptism since it restores itself by flying close enough to the sun to set its feathers afire and then diving into the water to be reborn.
Egg	The shell can be seen as a nurturing, life giving tomb. The hatching chick represents Christ emerging from the tomb.
Hammer and nails	Used at the crucifixion.
Hare	The hare is a symbol of the moon. It became associated with Easter because the moon is used to determine the date of Easter. According to the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after March 21st.
Holy Grail or the Cup Used by Jesus at the Last Supper	Before God created Adam and Eve, He came down from Heaven to visit the earth. In His absence, Satan seized His throne, gathered followers and ordered them to create a beautiful, jeweled crown for himself. As soon as Satan was crowned, the archangel Michael and his army came and hurled Satan and his minions to the earth. During the fight, one of the jewels broke off the crown, fell to earth and was lost. Eventually, the jewel was found and made into a cup which became the property of Joseph of Arimathea.

	<p>Joseph owned the house in which Jesus and his disciples ate the Last Supper. During the crucifixion, Joseph stood under the cross and caught a few drops of Christ's blood in this cup; after this it was known as the Holy Grail and had miraculous powers.</p> <p>Because Joseph allowed Christ to be buried in his own tomb, the priests seized Joseph and sealed him in a prison cell to starve to death. However, Joseph was fed by a miraculous light which shone from the Grail.</p> <p>After Joseph was rescued from his prison, he sailed to France with some relatives and followers, taking the Holy Grail. In France, the Grail fed each of them with their favorite food and drink and healed them of every illness. Every Good Friday, a dove came from Heaven and renewed the powers of the Grail by placing a consecrated wafer in it. When Joseph and his followers asked God questions, God replied by writing in letters of flame along the edge of the cup. Eventually some secret sin occurred among the followers and the Grail was taken away by God's holy angels. Even so, now and then, someone is granted a glimpse of the Holy Grail.</p>
Ladder	The ladder was used to take Jesus' body down from the cross – often shown with the hammer and nails.
Lamb	Jesus is associated with the paschal lamb in the Exodus story. The blood of the Passover lamb caused the angel of death to "pass over" the Israelites. John the Baptist calls Jesus "The Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." John chapter 1 verse 29
Lion	<p>In the Bible, Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The genealogies of the New Testament point out that Jesus was a descendant of Judah from whom the eternal ruler was to come.</p> <p>Additionally, the lion became a symbol of the resurrection because it was believed to be born dead. After 3 days, one of the cub's parents breathes life into it.</p>
Peacock	Symbolizes immortality and the resurrection since its flesh was once believed to be incorruptible or immune to decay.
Pelican	A symbol of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and in the Eucharist because it was believed to feed its babies with its own blood which the pelican caused to flow by piercing its own breast with its beak.
Phoenix	Believed to have retained its immortality since, unlike the rest of the birds, it refused to eat from the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden. The phoenix lived for 500 years between rejuvenations. Every 500 years, it created a combination funeral pyre/nest for itself of spices and herbs, sat on it and set itself on

	fire. When the fire died down, an egg would be found among the ashes from which the phoenix which laid it would hatch. It has become a symbol of the resurrection.
Pillar	This is the pillar Jesus was tied to when he was whipped, usually shown with the scourge or whip.
Rabbit	See <u>hare</u> above. Its helplessness may also represent the helplessness of man whose only defence is Christ.
Robe	The purple robe reminds us of the robe the soldiers put on Jesus to mock him.
Rope	The hangman's rope is the symbol of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, as Judas hanged himself afterwards.
Robin Redbreast	When God created the robin redbreast, He told the bird he must remain plain and grey until he earned his red badge of courage. At Golgotha, the robin, seeking to relieve the sufferings of the Saviour, overcame his fear of the mocking crowd, flew to Christ and pulled a thorn out of his head. The blood from the thorn's wound dripped on to the robin's breast and has caused it to be red ever since.
Scorpion	Its sting represents Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Christ with a kiss. Also represents the soldiers who scourged Christ.
Spear	The spear which was driven into Jesus' side while he was on the cross.
Swallow	Flew around the cross chirping "Svale! Svale!" which is Scandinavian for "Cheer up! Cheer up!" Since this bird hibernates in the mud during the winter, his awakening in the spring is a symbol of the resurrection.
Veil	A veil with a portrait of Christ on it is a reminder of the story of Veronica who dried Jesus' face with her veil as he was carrying his cross, and found that his face had left an imprint on the cloth.
Whale	See Matthew chapter 12 verse 40 - the three days Jonah spent in the stomach of the whale are thought to have been a pointer to the three days Jesus spent in the "belly of the earth" from Good Friday to Easter Sunday.

Recommended Resource:

A-Cross the World

Information, stories, activities and pictures linked to different representations of the cross from around the world. Church Missionary Society, Partnership House, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU
 Tel: 020 7928 8681 Fax: 020 7401 3215 www.cms-uk.org