

## Ask Mason & Teo



### Who picks the date for Easter each year?

Hi Mason & Teo, I enjoy reading your column in the Catholic Herald. As Easter approached, my family discussed the many traditions of Easter. One of my family members brought up about the Easter date and noticed that it changes yearly. How does the date get chosen yearly and why is it not on a set date like Christmas, Dec. 25. We checked out our Catholic calendar and noticed that the week after Easter is an octave, and so they asked, "What's an octave?" I wasn't sure what to say. I was hoping you'd help me find the answer. (Out-dated)

Dear Out-dated, Thank you for allowing us to share the joy of our Catholic faith especially during Easter. Easter, the feast of Christ's resurrection, is the core and pinnacle of the Christian year. We remember and celebrate the very foundation of Christianity in which Jesus is raised from the dead and claims victory over evil. Easter is linked to the Jewish Passover by much of its symbolism and celebrated on the Sunday following Holy Week.

By the second century, different church regions were celebrating Easter at different times. There was a debate between whether the annual commemoration of the paschal mystery should be celebrated on the 14th day of Nisan, following the Jewish custom, which is the first day of the full moon in the first month of spring no matter which day of the week this would fall on, or whether it should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the vernal equinox, the first day of spring.

In the year 325, all the churches agreed in the Council of Nicaea that the date of Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox (March 20 or 21).

Since Christ's resurrection fell on the first day of the week, Sunday, and it was the sign of new beginnings, springtime, it was natural for the first followers of Jesus to hold this moment sacred and for the church to highlight this annual anniversary with a special solemnity.

Still, Easter is not celebrated universally on that prescribed date. The Western Church uses the Gregorian calendar, an internationally accepted civil calendar, to calculate the Easter date. While the Eastern Orthodox Church uses the older Julian calendar. For this reason, the churches are still seeking an agreement in order to celebrate Easter on a common date (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1170).

The Church wants us to experience the pure joy of Easter. The joy of Easter

cannot be contained to just a moment, which is why the church celebrates the overflow of joy into 50 days, where Christians celebrated the release from the bondage of sin and the rising to new life of grace. Thus, Easter also refers to the 50 days of celebration called Eastertide, the days from Easter until the feast of Pentecost.

Easter has an octave. The eight days from Easter Sunday to Divine Mercy Sunday (the Second Sunday of Easter) are celebrated as one great day. The word "octave" comes from the Latin "octava" which means eight.

The practice of an octave probably had its roots in the Old Testament eight-day celebration of the Feast of Booths (Leviticus 23:36) and the Dedication of the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:9).

There is great symbolism in the 50 days of Easter. Seven weeks times seven days make 49 days, and the 50th day is Pentecost — the "eighth" Sunday of the season. The seven weeks of Easter makes a "week" of weeks of the Easter Season. And the whole Easter Season is about one-seventh of the whole year, so the whole 50 days of Easter are known as the Great Sunday of the entire year. Isn't that cool?!

Easter is truly a time of celebration and a time to hear and share the good news that death has been conquered and that Jesus is risen from the dead! Alleluia!

And we, too, rejoice in the resurrection! It is not enough to believe in the resurrection but to be the resurrection, to be fully alive in our self-sacrificing love of others, through our good works of forgiving, caring, encouraging and working for justice and peace.

Tap into the power of the resurrection!

Happy Easter!

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HCH photo/Patrick Downes

# Mary makes Newsweek

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh  
Special to the Herald

**T**he picture of the Virgin Mary on the cover of Newsweek is good marketing since Mary resonates at a deep, almost visceral level with Catholics and even those beyond the Catholic Church. If you want a cover to stop people in their tracks at the airport or drug store, featuring Mary is a smart move.

People relate to her, like they relate to their mother, someone always there, who, in the case of an Irish mother, may even think her son comes close to being God. When you feel sorrow, you know Mary's been there too. When you want the silent supporter, you recall her at the foot of the cross, steadfast when even that band of brothers, the apostles, had scattered. She gets the human experience.

Lisa Miller's accompanying cover essay about women in the church doesn't go in this direction, however. In fact, it is somewhat off-base, like

facile cocktail party conversation. Observations get tossed about without scrutiny. For example, she states, wrongly, that "few women retain high-profile management jobs, such as chancellor, within dioceses." Fact-checking proves that wrong. If you take the requirement for ordination off the table, data shows that the number of women in leadership positions in Catholic dioceses is comparable to that of the women in the U.S. workforce as a whole. One quarter of diocesan positions at the highest level, such as chancellor or chief financial officer, are held by women. You don't find similar numbers among U.S. corporations.

Influence in the church does not depend upon ordination, though there is no doubt that it helps. The greatest impact of the Catholic Church in the United States arguably has been through its education and hospital systems, where women have taken the lead from the start. Church women also have had an impact beyond the church. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, for example, touched hearts everywhere and educated us to the extent of abject global poverty. Historically, some women even have overshadowed popes. Most educated people have heard of Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena. Does

anyone, even the highly educated, know who the popes were when these women lived?

Lisa Miller's article sinks into male-bashing, church-style. She notes that not everyone in the church is bad, and suggests some hope for the church, thanks to women. She scoffs churchmen just as women when alone will dis men as hopeless and helpless, etc. (and no doubt as men similarly dis women when men gather by themselves.) This is good for laughs, but not to be taken seriously.

The topic de jour for media now is sexual abuse of minors by clergy.

Lisa Miller's article seems to reduce the problem to one that could be resolved by breaking open the all-male, celibate priesthood. You can't get a more simplistic analysis than that. Statistics show that 30-40 percent of sexual abuse occurs in the home, and that's a conservative estimate.

Thankfully the Catholic Church has not bought this quick solution line but has instead pursued serious study into the why of sexual abuse. By year's end the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops expects to release the results of a causes and context study that it commissioned

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Movie reviews

**Clash of the Titans** (Warner Bros.): Muddled mythological epic, set in ancient Greece, in which the demigod Perseus (Sam Worthington) embarks on a quest to defend humanity against the forces of Hades (Ralph Fiennes), the god of death, whom his brother Zeus (Liam Neeson), as king of the gods, has unleashed to punish humankind for their growing dissatisfaction with, and attempted rebellion against, the Olympian deities. Long action sequences and an emphasis on special effects leave little room for engaging drama in director Louis Leterrier's frequently violent 3-D remake of Desmond Davis' 1981 swords-and-sandals exercise, though undemanding viewers may be content enough with the proceedings not notice the gifts of top-tier players such as Fiennes and Neeson being squandered on stilted dialogue. Complex, though undeveloped, religious themes, constant action violence, some of it bloody or gruesome, a bedroom encounter with implied sexual activity, at least one sexual reference, a couple of mildly crass terms. A-III (PG-13)

**How to Train Your Dragon** (DreamWorks): Robust animated fantasy about a teenaged Viking (voiced by Jay Baruchel) who goes against his own people by befriend-ing and domesticating the creatures his society has been battling for 300 years. Directors Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois have fashioned an engaging boy's own action-adventure, based on Cressida Cowell's book, with impressive 3-D visuals and a constructive pacifist message. While not overly taxing on brain cells or the imagination, it constitutes an above-average family-oriented ride, keeping in mind younger children may be frightened at times. Much relatively intense fantasy action, some harsh descriptions of Viking-dragon mayhem, two instances of potty language, two mildly off-color references to body parts. A-II (PG)

**Letters to God** (Vivendi): Inspirational and touching drama, based on real events, about a faith-filled but cancer-stricken 8-year-old boy



**Date Night** (Fox): This well-intentioned but ultimately wayward mix of the romantic comedy and action genres sees an ordinary suburban New Jersey couple (Steve Carell and Tina Fey) caught up in an underworld blackmail scheme after being mistaken for the cohabiting lowlifes (James Franco and Mila Kunis) who are out to sell the damning evidence. As written by Josh Klausner and directed by Shawn Levy, the pair's nocturnal Manhattan odyssey — during which they flee a duo of thugs (Common and Jimmi Simpson) in the employ of a mob boss (Ray Liotta), and turn for help to a James Bond-like intelligence agent (Mark Wahlberg) — though its travails aid them to rekindle their flickering love for each other, eventually leads to an underground sex club where they briefly find themselves forced to entertain a powerful patron with perverse tastes. Considerable, though bloodless, action violence, partial rear nudity, much sexual humor, including gags about casual sex, masturbation and aberrant practices, at least one use of profanity and of the F-word, some crude and crass language. L (PG-13)

(Tanner Maguire) whose prayers and reflections are expressed in a series of letters to the Almighty, and the effect these notes have on his family — including his widowed, over-taxed mother (Robyn Lively), his devout grandmother (Maree Cheatham) and his emotionally conflicted teen brother (Michael Christopher Bolten) — but especially on the depressed, boozing war-vet-turned-postman (Jeffrey S.

Johnson) who has recently taken over the local mail route. Though the underlying theology of director David Nixon's family-friendly tale of courage and conversion is evangelical, the basic message about the power of Gospel values to transform lives is sufficiently nondenominational to exert a strong appeal on Christian believers of every stripe. Life-threatening illness, divorce and alcoholism themes. A-II

(PG)  
**Tyler Perry's Why Did I get Married Too?** (Lionsgate): Dramatically uneven but, for the most part, morally steady sequel mixing comedy and drama and examining the renewed marital challenges of four couples — a successful self-help author (Janet Jackson) and her architect spouse (Malik Yoba), a sports-caster (Michael Jai White) and his hyper-suspicious wife (Tasha

Ratings

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I — general patronage; A-II — adults and adolescents; A-III — adults; L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O — morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G — general audiences, all ages admitted; PG — parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R — restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 — no one 17 or under admitted; NR — no rating.

- Alice in Wonderland .....A-II (PG)
- The Bounty Hunter .....L (PG-13)
- Clash of the Titans .....A-III (PG-13)
- Date Night .....L (PG-13)
- Diary of a Wimpy Kid .....A-II (PG)
- Green Zone .....L (R)
- Hot Tub Time Machine .....O (R)
- How to Train Your Dragon .....A-II (PG)
- The Last Song .....A-II (PG)
- Letters to God .....A-II (PG)
- Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief .....A-II (PG)
- Tyler Perry's Why Did I get Married Too? .....A-III (PG-13)

Smith), a lawyer (Sharon Leal) whose husband (Tyler Perry) begins to doubt her fidelity, and a divorcee (Jill Scott) whose second marriage is under strain due to her new partner's (Lamman Rucker) ongoing unemployment. While implicitly endorsing Scott's character's remarriage after her split from her abusive ex (Richard T. Jones) — who puts in a remorseful reappearance here — writer-director Perry's follow-up to his 2007 hit "Why Did I Get Married?" is otherwise all about commitment, though the script's highlighted values, such as open communication and self-giving love, do not rest on a spiritual foundation. Brief, nongraphic marital lovemaking, a nonmarital bedroom scene, intense domestic discord, adultery theme, numerous sexual references, including mention of sterilization and venereal disease, drug references, frequent crass language. A-III (PG-13)

Twenty Something



Christina Capecchi | Toss or save? A Catholic take on spring cleaning

Whether spring cleaners decide to toss it or save it may be determined by whether they tune into American Pickers or Hoarders, two reality TV shows that issue opposite edicts on excess accumulation.

I started with the History Channel's American Pickers, a likable lowan duo who cruise backroads in search of antiques buried in barns and basements. "What most people see as junk," the host explains, "we see as dollar signs."

When he scored a dusty old bike for \$1,000, he squealed, "My pickin' prayers have been answered."

I got sucked right in. When the pickers discovered a Remington typewriter, I blurted out, "I'd like

one of those!" It's not as if I'm nostalgic; I've never used one. And what would I do with it? Set it beside my laptop? Display it in a turn-back-the-clock, just-for-show office?

Soon after I flipped to A&E's Hoarders, which films packrats whose lives and piles of stuff are on the brink of collapse. There's Shirley the cat collector who protests to the police, and Patty and Bill, who lost their kids to their unmanageable mess.

That sent me straight to my closet, armed with a 39-gallon garbage bag.

I knew it was time.

I removed my jewelry, pulled up my hair, and turned to the "What Women Want" soundtrack. It began with a trumpet blast and Sammy Davis Jr.'s warning, "When an irresistible force such as you meets an old immovable object like me you can bet just as sure as you live somethin's gotta give."

In my case many things gave:

pleather belts, corduroy blazers, tweed skirts. Horizontal stripes, diagonal stripes, and vertical stripes. Tops that were juvenile and tops that were matronly. Pants that were too small and pants that were too big.

I was tickled by the empty hangers and sense of order that emerged.

That's not to say I didn't save a few sentimental items. The letter jacket I'll never again wear in public. The black shirt I wore the day I got engaged. And the sparkly silver sweater I planned to wear the day I got engaged.

I like to make a distinction that I hope is a fair one: I'm not a hoarder, but I am a documenter. So I do save the kind of stuff that tends to collect dust beneath staircases. Movie ticket stubs. Birthday cards. Name badges from conferences and conventions. The kind of stuff that could go in a scrapbook — if I decided to take up scrapbooking one day.

Newsweek

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the City University of New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice to do.

So Newsweek asks: What would Mary do? The question is worth pondering.

We don't know a lot about her. We know she slipped off to Egypt with Joseph to protect her child from a threatening Herod. We know that with a comment, "They have no wine," she saved the wedding feast of Cana.

We know that when the bereft apostles gathered in an upper room after Jesus' death she stood with them. She protected the innocent child, no matter the cost. She heard another's pain and acted. She stood in solidarity. These were not grandiose displays but they were selfless acts which had a profound impact for centuries afterwards. And they got her on the cover of Newsweek too.

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I figure the Holy Father would understand. When he moved into the papal apartment, his collection of 20,000 books followed him. "For me it's like being surrounded by friends, now that there are books on the shelf," he said.

Toss or save?

It's a crossroads many of us stand at this spring, as we prepare the house and soul for warmer weather and lighter accouterments.

To toss, in many ways, is to be relieved, to feel light and unfettered. But to save can mean being grounded, glued to tokens of a rich, well-lived life.

The Easter miracle illustrates both.

We are freed from the earthly shackles of sin, just as Jesus was unbound by the tomb. Yet we are fastened to that moment, so deeply rooted that we pick and press all the flowers that have blossomed from those seeds.

In Easter we celebrate history and novelty, responsibility and possibility.

Our closets may be full, but so are our hearts.

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