

# Israel celebrates Passover

Joe Sarnicola/Contributing writer

When Israel had been a captive nation in Egypt, the Lord chose a man named Moses to lead them to live free in a land of their own. The Pharaoh of Egypt did not want his slaves to go, so he refused when Moses asked for their freedom. God had to persuade Pharaoh with plagues of locusts, frogs, drought and even death. Reluctantly, he agreed to let the Israelites go, but he sent his army after them to kill them rather than let them be free. God saved his people by parting the Red Sea so that they could cross on dry land. When Pharaoh's army tried to follow, the sea fell on them like a fist of God.

Now Moses was dead, and Joshua had been chosen by God to be the new leader of Israel. "I will deliver to you every place where you set foot. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be firm and steadfast. Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go. Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel."

Although many people had died during the long period of living in the desert, many new children had been born during that same time, some of whom had grown into young adults. So God gave Joshua instructions for a ceremony of purification for his people, after which he said, "Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you."



Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers



While the Israelites stayed at the place of purification, called Gilgal, they celebrated the anniversary of Passover. Passover was the day of the last and most terrible plague to hit Egypt before Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to leave. An angel of death would fly over the country and kill the firstborn in every household

unless he saw sacrificial blood on the doorframes. If he did, he would pass over those homes.

Passover was a happy celebration indeed. The Israelites were no longer slaves in Egypt, they were not wandering in the wilderness and God had promised them a land of their own. They no longer had to eat the manna that God provided for them when they were homeless. From their own crops they ate unleavened cakes and parched grain.

## READ MORE ABOUT IT:

Joshua 5

## Q&A

1. Whose place did Joshua take as leader?
2. What did the Israelites eat at Passover?

## Bible Accent

Before the ancient Israelites were able to escape the slavery and captivity in Egypt, God had to persuade Pharaoh with 10 plagues, or tragic events. Some of the plagues, such as frogs, locusts and severe hail, destroyed crops, causing famines and other hardships.

Before sending the last and most dreadful plague, God warned the Israelites to smear the blood of a sacrificed lamb on their home doorframes. Seeing the blood on the home, the angel delivering the plague would not stop at that house, but would "pass over" it.

Many Bible scholars believe that this Old Testament story, known as Passover, represents the blood of Jesus that was shed when he died on the cross for our sins.

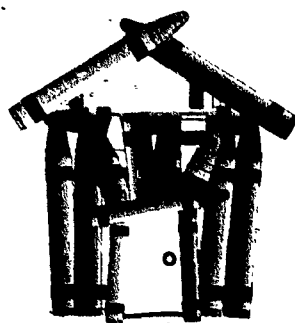
## St. Oengus

Oengus entered the monastery of Clonagh in the mid-700s. Studying with some of the best religious scholars in Ireland, he applied himself so thoroughly to his studies and his moral development that he earned a reputation for being one of the most knowledgeable and holy men in his country.

Oengus liked to be alone to study and to pray so he moved into a nearby hermitage. As part of his daily devotions, he would recite Scripture passages while under a large tree or while standing in cold water. Curious visitors would often come to watch and listen.

To find more solitude, Oengus disguised himself and became a servant in another monastery. His true identity was found out when he again taught people. He spent many years at the monastery.

He eventually returned to Clonagh and may have become its abbot. He died in 824, and we honor this great teacher on March 11.



## Kids' Club

You can win a \$50 savings bond by writing an essay (100 or fewer words) in response to **Passover was an important day to our Biblical ancestors. Why do you think it is important to celebrate holidays, such as Christmas and Easter?**

Send your essay — including name, home address, telephone number, school & grade — to *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624. Deadline for entries is March 18. The

winner, whose essay will be published in an upcoming issue of *Kids' Chronicle*, will be notified by phone.

Last month's winner was Rose Hayes, a sixth-grader at Christ the King School. In response to **Why do you think David was a good choice to be a king of Israel?** she wrote, "There were many kings of Israel. One important king was David. David was a great king. He had many good qualities; he was faithful, fair and honest. David was a great soldier as well. He also kept his promise to respect the leaders of the northern tribes. He united the people of the northern tribes with Israel with the southern tribes. Honesty made David a great king because when he committed two serious sins he admitted it. David was fair because he promised to treat everyone fairly. He was faithful because when no one would fight Goliath he had faith that God would protect him and won the battle. David was a great king because he recognized his own failures and resolved not to repeat them."

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## Puzzle

The answers to the following questions have the letters of the word Passover as their first letter. Answers on page 11.

1. A clergyman who presides at Mass. P \_\_\_\_\_
2. The fifth book of the New Testament. A \_\_\_\_\_
3. A holy day of rest. S \_\_\_\_\_
4. The Good ... S \_\_\_\_\_
5. A very short Old Testament book. O \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where the pope lives. V \_\_\_\_\_
7. Jacob's twin brother. E \_\_\_\_\_
8. Last book of the Bible. R \_\_\_\_\_