

Calendar

Monday

JUNE 3

St. Charles Lwanga and
Companions, Martyrs

Acts 19:1–8

Jn 16:29–33

Tuesday

JUNE 4

Easter Weekday

Acts 20:17–27

Jn 17:1–11a

Wednesday

JUNE 5

St. Boniface,
Bishop and Martyr

Acts 20:28–38

Jn 17:11b–19

Thursday

JUNE 6

Easter Weekday

Acts 22:30; 23:6–11

Jn 17:20–26

Friday

JUNE 7

Easter Weekday

Acts 25:13b–21

Jn 21:15–19

Saturday

JUNE 8

Easter Weekday

Acts 28:16–20, 30–31

Jn 21:20–25

Sunday

JUNE 9

Pentecost

Acts 2:1–11

1 Cor 12:3b–7, 12–13 or

Rom 8:8–17

Jn 20:19–23 or

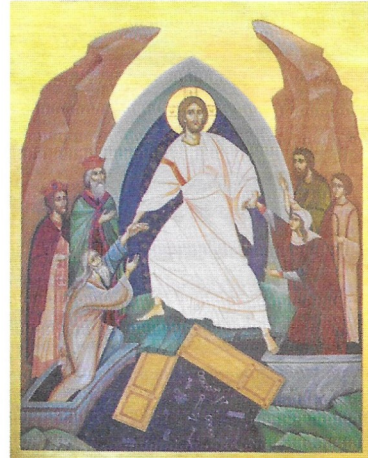
Jn 14:15–16, 23b–26

Dear Padre,

I'm confused by the phrase in the Apostles' Creed that says Jesus "descended into hell" before he rose on Easter. What does that mean?

In the Old Testament, everyone who died, good or bad, ended up in Sheol. Sheol was portrayed as a shadowy place where the dead dwelt in a miserable existence, deprived of God. In the New Testament, this place was referred to as Hades or Gehenna. *Hades* is the Greek word for "the land of the dead." *Gehenna* is a word with Hebrew origins that referred to the valley of Hinnom. This valley was a narrow gorge, south of Jerusalem, used for a garbage dump. This image was used by Jesus for the place of punishment for the wicked after death (Matthew 5:22; 18:8).

When the Apostles' Creed states "he descended into hell," it means Jesus really suffered the effects of death—and did, indeed, die—and that everyone must suffer. Jesus died and went to Hades, where all the dead had to go. The Church has traditionally taught that Jesus also had a mission to perform when he went to Hades. Because everyone, whether evil or righteous, ended up in Hades, Jesus came to free the just ones who had gone before him. This is the so-called "harrowing of hell," which was a popular devotion in medieval times. Jesus went to hell and released those holy souls stranded there. Some Eastern Church iconography portrays Jesus rising from the tomb and bringing those people out of the underworld and up to heaven with him.



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of our Advocate.

A Word from Pope Francis

[Jesus] is like a roped guide climbing a mountain who, on reaching the summit, pulls us up to him and leads us to God. If we entrust our life to him, if we let ourselves be guided by him, we are certain to be in safe hands, in the hands of our Savior,

—General audience, April 17, 2013