

NEWS

Christians mark second Easter under COVID lockdown

Millions around the world celebrated a second Easter under coronavirus restrictions. Pope Francis marked the occasion with Italy under a strict lockdown. Read DW for more.



Pope Francis celebrates Easter Mass at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican

Pope Francis called for Catholics to stay hopeful in his Easter Sunday address, calling vaccines an "essential tool" in ending the pandemic.

The pontiff and urged the swift rollout of coronavirus shots to the world's poorest countries.

"The pandemic is still spreading, while the social and economic crisis remains severe, especially for the poor," said the Pope, speaking to a congregation of only around 100 in the vast St. Peter's Basilica.

Before the pandemic, Easter Sunday mass was usually held in St Peter's Square in front of tens of thousands of pilgrims. Francis held this year's service, which was streamed online, at the basilica.



This year's Easter celebrations at the Vatican saw small crowds amid concerns about the spread of the coronavirus

The Pope had delivered a message of hope and renewal ahead of Easter Sunday mass and his annual Urbi et Orbi blessing from the Vatican.

"It is always possible to begin anew because there is a new life that God can awaken in us in spite of all our failures," Francis said during an Easter Vigil Mass on Saturday.

That service started earlier than usual so that participants could get home before a 10 p.m. curfew in Rome. Like the rest of Italy, the capital is under tough lockdown restrictions during the Easter weekend.

DW takes a look at other ways people are celebrating Easter around the world.

Middle East

Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa — the highest Catholic dignitary in the Holy Land — led the traditional Easter Mass at Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Worshippers were allowed to participate again despite the coronavirus pandemic, unlike last year. However, because of travel restrictions, neither pilgrims nor tourists were present.

Enjoying Easter with the family in Jerusalem

Asia

Amid concern about fresh attacks, the island's Christian minority across the country attended Easter Sunday masses under tight armed police and military security.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith — Sri Lanka's top Catholic leader — lit candles at the St. Anthony's church where 56 people perished when suspected Islamists carried out coordinated suicide attacks against three hotels and three churches.

Ranjith warned of street protests unless those responsible were prosecuted.

There was also heavy security for Christians in **Indonesia** after a bomb attack at a cathedral last week.

Armed police and military personnel were deployed at churches during Easter celebrations across the vast Muslim-majority archipelago nation, where Christians make up 10% of the population.

While Indonesia has long struggled with attacks by Islamist militants, the country been particularly on edge since two suicide bombers [blew themselves up at a cathedral](#) on the Catholic-majority Sulawesi island, wounding 20 people.



Easter eggs are painted with slogans from the protests against the military coup, in Mandalay, Myanmar

[Anti-coup protesters](#) in mainly Buddhist **Myanmar** used the celebration to put across their message with "Easter egg strikes."

Opponents of the junta wrote anti-military slogans on eggs as a symbol of defiance and opposition to the February coup. The eggs were either placed in public areas or photos were shared on social media.

Americas

In **Brazil**, despite an alarming number of coronavirus infections and deaths, a Supreme Court judge has cleared the way for in-person church services to take place this Easter weekend.

An injunction was issued on Saturday that prevents states and municipalities from banning attendance at religious celebrations because of the pandemic. The judge reportedly declared bans that had already been imposed to be invalid.

Attendance must meet several requirements, with churches filled to only 25% capacity and worshippers wearing masks and maintaining social distancing.

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Coronavirus digest: Italy locks down again

The UK variant has brought a new surge in infections. Meanwhile, Indonesia has become the latest country to halt the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Follow DW for the latest.

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