

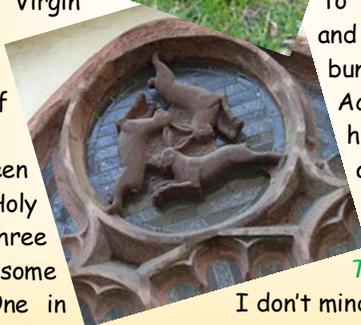


## Easter Funnies

I can cope with the connection between eggs and Easter. After all, their shape could be related to the stone which covered the tomb, and the hollow eggs remind us of its emptiness. Likewise chicks and the imagery of resurrection and the new life which comes from faith in Jesus.

### *But why the bunnies?*

The symbol of the hare has roots a long way back, with pre-Christian heritage. In ancient Greek and Roman times it was widely believed that the hare was a hermaphrodite, and could reproduce without loss of virginity. This led to an association with the Virgin Mary, as illustrated in illuminated manuscripts and Mediaeval paintings of the Virgin and Christ Child. It may also have been associated with the Holy Trinity, as in the three hares motif found in some church buildings. The "One in Three and Three in One" is commonly represented by a triangle or three interlocking shapes such as rings. One well embroidered legend tells of a young rabbit who, for three days, waited anxiously for his friend, Jesus, to return to



the Garden of Gethsemane, little knowing what had become of Him. Early on Easter morning, Jesus returned to His favourite garden and was welcomed by His animal friend.

### *Making connections*

However fanciful that legend is, it at least makes the connection with the facts of the resurrection. But apparently when German immigrants brought the idea of the Easter Bunny to Sweden in the late 19th century, the Swedish word for the Easter Bunny, "Påskharen", was misheard as "Påskkarlen", meaning the Easter Man or the Easter Wizard. So the Swedish tradition is of the Easter Wizard bringing eggs for Easter and in Sweden today children dress up as Witches at Easter.

### *Egg-laying bunnies*

So just as we have the Germans to thank for our Christmas trees and Santa, so too the Easter bunny—or hare, as it should be. According to their tradition, the hare would nest only in the caps and bonnets of good children, leaving gifts of coloured eggs before Easter.

### *Too far from the truth?*

I don't mind a bit of fanciful story-telling. But in our multi-cultural society, I do fear that the facts of Christianity are blurred and hidden by the secularised trappings. So, for the record, being a Christian is NOT about being good enough, and it doesn't involve belief in the Easter bunny!

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