

THIS IS HOW WE DO IT



PASEKA/ EASTER

IN THE BLACK COMMUNITIES

By Refilwe Ramagoshi

Easter is a time of reflection about what we as Christians believe in. It is also a time that many of us have an opportunity to go to our rural villages to see loved ones and to attend national denominational conferences.

I spoke to members of Dipilara Senior Citizens Club in Mamelodi West, who represent a number of religious denominations, to hear how they celebrate Paseka or Easter.

Roman Catholic Church: Roman Catholics start with the 40 days of Lent when they fast, giving up their favourite foods, and donating money to charities or families in need. They focus on Bible study and meet every Wednesday. At 18:00 on Holy Saturday they make a huge bonfire, the light of the fire being symbolic of the light Jesus brought the world. They then enter the church to welcome and baptise new members.

On Good Friday at the church they carry out *Tsela ya Sefapano*, or the Stations of the Cross, walking in a procession. After the service, congregants leave the church and remain silent until they reach home.

Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lutheran Bapedi Church and the Anglican Church, also called Tšhetšhe: Members of these denominations do as the Roman Catholics do, and they also go from house to house, praying for people: *Ba tsoetsa batho*.

Apostolic Faith Mission: Members hold national conferences. On the Thursday night before the conference, which is held on Good Friday, a member of the church explains the seven words of Christ. These are the words Jesus Christ uttered on the cross. Prayers are said, and members of the congregation are then free to attend the Paseka conference.

Universal Kingdom of God: Church members invite sick people and those who have problems to their gathering on 25 March at Ellis Park. Members help to cover the costs of transport and food, and provide clothes where needed. The invited guests have to speak to God themselves and ask for solutions to their individual problems.

Holy Gospel Church: Normal church services are held, with the focus on the life and teachings of Christ. Members hold a conference in April.

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA): The seven words of Jesus Christ are taught, and members celebrate Palm Sunday.

Dutch Reformed Church: The focus is on Good Friday and that Jesus Christ died for our sins.

Toronos Apostolic Church: Members fast during the day and break the fast at night until a week after Good Friday. Their focus is on healing sick people and those who have problems. Chosen 'mothers' are given permission to pray for these people, and not only male pastors.

The Twelve Apostolic Church of Christ: Like Jesus's 12 apostles, members go from house to house, teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even to people who have never been to church.

New Church of South Africa: For them, Paseka lasts 10 days. The pastor chooses seven people to teach the seven words of Christ. On Palm Sunday members bring palm branches to church and sing hymns about Paseka.

Fellowship World of Research: This church celebrates Paseka through national and international conferences.

Zion Christian Church (ZCC): Each year during the Easter holidays, church members go in their millions (about 5 million in 2015) to Moria in Polokwane to meet the bishop and to pray for blessings.

Cleaning of the graves: Many people clean the graves at Easter, some because they feel it is time to speak to their ancestors, but mostly because many family members are at home then. They pray at their family graveyards, presenting problems and showing that they have not forgotten the people who passed away. It is also associated with the Rising of the Lord, *Tsogo ya Morena*, when Mary Magdalene went to the grave where Jesus was buried. Some churches object to this custom, but mostly they approve.

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