



by ICR Specialist Marisa Di Nitto



HOLY WEEK IN ITALY

In Italy, Easter celebrations are a weave of ancient peasant traditions and passionate religious rites that tie together faith and folklore, the sacred and the profane.

On Palm Sunday nearly every church in Italy is packed with people. Palm leaves are grown in darkness so that they are pliable and nearly white - some are woven in fancy designs.

Following Palm Sunday, the leaves are kept in the home for the rest of the year as a sign of peace and divine protection.

In some parts of the country, farmers burn a few leaves from the blessed olive branches to safeguard their crops when a storm approaches.

In Maenza, a small town south of Rome, adults and children don historical costumes on Palm Sunday and pave the streets with carpets and flowers for the town's re-enactment of Jesus entering Jerusalem.

During Holy Week, dramatic processions are

held throughout Italy. Some are elaborate and solemn processions involving hundreds of participants. Taking part often requires commitment and sacrifice from the faithful.

In Sicily, members of religious societies, known as confraternities, wear hooded monks' robes and carry enormous crucifixes - often of great artistic value - that are decorated with silver flowers and bells. The hooded penitents, bent under their weighty burdens, go through the streets in a slow dance.

South of Naples, in Pomigliano d'Arco, hundreds of penitents, dressed in outfits with red sashes, run barefooted through the streets, carrying oversized votive candles, banners and statues until many, their feet blistered and bleeding, fall out exhausted.

In Taranto, in southeastern Italy, the rites of Holy Week rival the theatrics and pageantry of Spain's famed HolyWeek processions.

In Gaeta, a Good Friday procession takes place

in the early evening (seven). The procession begins at San Giacomo Church in Piccolo Alley. People who follow the procession carry lighted candles as they walk the main street - Corso Cavour, then along the waterfront toward the fish market (La Villa) and back to the church.

La pastiera is the typical "sweet" that is eaten on Easter - it's made of kernels of grain, ricotta cheese, eggs, and much more. Also lamb is a traditional second course baked with potatoes, onions, and sprinkled with lots of romano cheese.

The Easter Bunny in Italy comes in the form of a chocolate egg in all dimensions containing a surprise. The larger the egg, the better the gift, the higher the price. **CARMINE**'s working pastry shop, just across the street from the Gaeta American Elementary School and next to the butcher shop (macelleria), makes luscious chocolate eggs. (Bring a gift with you and he will hide it in the egg.) **BUONA PASQUA!**

by New Parent Support Nurse, Tracey Ybarra

MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

The month of April is the time to honor a very special group of young people - our military children.



There are more than 1 million of them, scattered around the globe. They move from place to place, say goodbye often, but they never stray far from our hearts. They face special challenges, moving every few years and making new friends, dealing with concerns about the safety of their active-duty parents when they're far away from them, not being able to talk to or see them every day, having to spend long periods apart. But it's these challenges that make them special. They experience different cultures and understand diversity better than most. It's part of their education, and they benefit from it.

The New Parent Support Program understands how special these children are and offers classes and workshops that seek to celebrate our unique way of life. One of the newest programs offered through New Parent Support is the "Parent and Tot" Playgroup. This fun and informative group of parents and children age five and younger meet weekly on Friday mornings in the CC multipurpose room from 0900 to 1030. While children have the opportunity to learn through play, parents have the opportunity to exchange ideas about all the wonderful things that kids do. This is a great place to meet other parents just like you. For more information on the great things happening with New Parent Support stop by the Fleet and Family Support Center or call 0771 709 818. ●