

MADRID

# Holy Week makes for unique break

Spaniards celebrate Jesus' passion, 11 days off from school

Three weeks ago, I had to suffer through all my friends' Facebook statuses welcoming Spring Break with open arms and new swim suits. I, on the other hand, had a week of classes and a week of mid-terms between me and my own

"descanso de primavera." Unlike most of my friends, though, my break was bound to feel holy.

Spain's school system follows a different schedule than its U.S. counterpart, to say the least. Not only does the second semester start at the beginning of February and finish at the end of June, but the week-long "spring break" (which includes the Friday before and the Monday after) coincides with Holy Week, Christianity's celebration of Jesus' Passion, death and Resurrection. For a country with progressive abortion and gay marriage laws, Spain retains a cultural Catholicism that allows Sundays with family, saints' days as public holidays and a break equal to the holiest part of the Church year. Like mixing vinegar and olive oil, the liberal and conservative strains of Spain stay very separated but taste wonderful together.

I decided to treat my Holy Week ("Semana Santa") like a true culturally conscious Spaniard. On either end of a four-day trip to the Canary Islands (a trip devoid of all religion, unless you worship the sun god), I booked two very Catholic events. I spent Palm Sunday in Seville and the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday) in Barcelona and



Nine layperson brotherhoods organized Palm Sunday processions in Seville, Spain. Here, the final brotherhood makes its way down the steps of a cathedral.

Gerona.

Seville should figure into any Catholic Spaniard's Semana Santa plans. It houses the third-largest church in the world, a former mosque converted into a cathedral during the Reconquista. Even more impressive are the Palm Sunday processions: each of nine brotherhoods organized one starting at 1 p.m. and ending at 3 a.m.

The morning's Masses provided more than enough public displays of faith, especially in the small parades around churches; I had never seen people carry such finely woven palms.

After four days of sun worship, I arrived in Barcelona for Holy

Thursday. It was a simple service at the Sagrada Familia, an unfinished church designed by Antoni Gaudí. The procession of candles around the chapel gave the feeling of an intimate ceremony perfect for a commemoration of the Last Supper. To me, it seemed simple enough to have been performed by the early Christians in Jerusalem.

I got a rare twofer on Good Friday. I attended a service in the morning outside the Sagrada Familia, in front of Gaudí's massive façade depicting his interpretation of the Stations of the Cross. Then it was off to Gerona with my parents, where I attended a Seville-like proces-

sion at the steps of the cathedral. Thanks to a kid named Ignacio, I sat right at the foot of the steps, so I could see everything from Roman sandals to penitents in hoods and from a float of the Pieta to a close-up of the archbishop.

Sadly, I missed the Easter celebrations in both Barcelona and Gerona (blame the check-out time at the hotel). Even so, I noticed a theme I had seen all week: the effect of the celebrations on secular life. Seville blocked off streets for the Palm Sunday processions, as did Gerona on Good Friday. And Gerona stopped working, in effect, as nearly everyone attended Mass at 11 a.m.

at the cathedral.

Although the 1978 constitution says "no religion shall have a state character," Spain still retains much of its (very public) Catholic heritage. To many, that's perfectly acceptable. The constitution also says public authorities shall "maintain appropriate cooperation relations with the Catholic Church and other confessions" and public religion has "no other restriction on expression than may be necessary to maintain public order as protected by law." The Spanish mix of church and state, much like vinegar and olive oil, serves to enrich the culture and liveliness of the country.

## AROUND THE COUNTRY

### Police officer arrested for alleged rape

ONTARIO, Calif. — A police officer has been arrested for allegedly kidnapping and raping a woman. Police say Anthony Orban was booked into jail after his service revolver was found in his alleged victim's car.

Ontario police Deputy Chief John Evans says Orban allegedly abducted a 24-year-old restaurant employee as she left work Saturday at Ontario Mills Mall, forced her to drive to Fontana, raped her and left.

Jeff Jelenek, an officer with the California Department of Corrections, is also implicated, but his exact role is unclear. He was booked for carjacking and acting as an accessory to a crime after the fact.

### Mexico quake kills 2, rattles US states

MEXICALI, Mexico — Aftershocks rattled the Mexico-U.S. border Monday in the aftermath of a major earthquake that killed two people, blacked out cities and forced the evacuation of hospitals and nursing homes.

Sunday's 7.2-magnitude quake, centered just south of the border, was one of the strongest earthquakes to hit the region in decades, shaking at least 20 million people.

The human toll was minimal largely because the quake's energy moved northwest toward a less populated area, said Jessica Sigala, a U.S. Geological Survey geophysicist. Building construction has also improved in northern Mexico, said Carlos Valdes, chief of the Mexican National Seismological Service. Still, some homes were destroyed, said Javier Ruiz, an inspector with the city's civil protection agency.

One man was killed when his home collapsed, and another died when he ran into the street in panic and was struck by a car.

— AP Briefs

# A Friend Dies. Who Cares?

Toxic drinking is an epidemic on campuses all across America.

It means consuming so much alcohol the drinker passes out. But while "sleeping it off," the victim may be quietly dying.

When you come right down to it, students themselves are the best ones to tackle this problem. So, in growing numbers, Stony Brook students have joined together in the Red Watch Band movement.

Working with experts, they fine-tuned a course in techniques to handle these alcohol emergencies. Red Watch Band members can act fast, when every second counts. They know the quick steps they can take to rescue a passed-out student from a drinking death, and can immediately summon professional help. Everyone completing the course is given the distinctive red watch for identification.

Since its inception at Stony Brook University in March 2009, approximately 40 schools across the country have signed on to implement this lifesaving program.

To prevent toxic drinking deaths, go to [redwatchband.org](http://redwatchband.org)



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