

# Journey through the Season of Lent



An exploration into the themes, liturgies,  
symbols, and practices of Lent & Holy Week.

Kickoff Session  
Tuesday, February 25, 2020  
6:30 PM

## Ash Wednesday: The Beginning of Lent

- Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent
  - 46 days before Easter Sunday
  - Lent is a 40-day season (not counting Sundays)
  - Marked by repentance, fasting, reflection, and ultimately celebration
  - The 40-day period represents Christ's time of temptation in the wilderness, where he fasted and where Satan tempted him.
  - Lent asks believers to set aside a time each year for similar fasting, marking an intentional season of focus on Christ's life, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection.
- The ashes are prepared by burning palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday. On Palm Sunday, churches bless and hand out palm branches to attendees, a reference to the Gospels' account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when onlookers lay palm branches on his path.
- The ashes of this holiday symbolize two main things: death and repentance. "Ashes are equivalent to dust, and human flesh is composed of dust or clay (Genesis 2:7), and when a human corpse decomposes, it returns to dust or ash."
- "When we come forward to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, we are saying that we are sorry for our sins, and that we want to use the season of Lent to correct our faults, purify our hearts, control our desires and grow in holiness so we will be prepared to celebrate Easter with great joy" (The CatholicSpirit.com).
- With this focus on our own mortality and sinfulness, Christians can enter into the Lent season solemnly, while also looking forward in greater anticipation and joy of the

message of Easter and Christ's ultimate victory over sin and death.

- Lent has likely been observed: "since apostolic times, though the practice was not formalized until the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE."
- Lent became more regularized after the legalization of Christianity in A.D. 313. St. Irenaeus, Pope St. Victor I, and St. Athanasius all seem to have written about Lent during their ministries.
- By the end of the fourth century, the 40-day period of Easter preparation known as Lent existed, and that prayer and fasting constituted its primary spiritual exercises.

Why do we fast? (Think: On whom do we depend?)

How do we fast?

- According to the Book of Common Prayer, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of strict fast. Only one meatless meal should be taken. If necessary for strength, a second smaller (meatless) meal may also be taken. All days in Lent except Sundays are days of abstinence and self-denial. Fasting ends after the First Mass of Easter on Holy Saturday.

The traditional Lenten fast for Western Catholics is as follows:

- Fridays and Saturdays: abstinence and fast (only one meatless meal may be taken).
- All other days of Lent: partial abstinence and fast (one principal meal may be taken, but it may include meat).
- Lenten Ember days: abstinence and fast.
- Sundays and Feasts: no fasting nor abstinence

## Principal Days during Lent

- Sundays *in* Lent
  - Sundays are feasts of the Resurrection and are not considered to be *of* Lent, but *in* Lent.
- Ember Days
  - Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday in the First Week of Lent.
  - Focus on ministry and vocations.
- *Laetare* “Rose” Sunday
  - *Laetare* is derived from the opening words of the Latin Mass, “Rejoice (Laetare) Jerusalem” (Is 66:10).
  - The church is called to joyful anticipation of the victory to be won. This joyful theme provides lightening from the penitential emphasis of Lent. Priests have worn rose-colored vestments since about the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.
  - Rose Sunday expresses a change of tone in the Lenten observance. *Laetare* Sunday therefore may be called “Rose Sunday.” Flowers can be used on this day.
- Palm Sunday
  - Palm Sunday is the final Sunday of Lent, the beginning of Holy Week, and commemorates the triumphant arrival of Christ in Jerusalem, days before he was crucified.
  - Palm Sunday is known as such because the faithful will often receive palm fronds which they use to participate in the reenactment of Christ's arrival in Jerusalem. In the Gospels, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a young donkey, and to the lavish praise of the townspeople who threw clothes, or possibly palms or small branches, in front of him as a sign of homage. This was a customary practice for people of great respect.

- Palm branches are widely recognized symbol of peace and victory, hence their preferred use on Palm Sunday.
- The use of a donkey instead of a horse is highly symbolic, it represents the humble arrival of someone in peace, as opposed to arriving on a steed in war.
- A week later, Christ would rise from the dead on the first Easter, despite the Passion and being crucified.
- The Triduum
  - Maundy Thursday
    - Maundy Thursday is the commemoration of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ, when he established the sacrament of Holy Communion prior to his arrest and crucifixion. It also commemorates His institution of the priesthood. The holy day falls on the Thursday before Easter and is part of Holy Week. Jesus celebrated the dinner as a Passover feast. Christ would fulfill His role as the Christian victim of the Passover for all to be saved by His final sacrifice. Footwashing represents the servitude of the priesthood.
    - The word “maundy” comes from the Latin ‘*mandatum*’ or commandment.
    - The Holy Thursday liturgy, celebrated in the evening because Passover began at sundown, also shows both the worth God ascribes to the humility of service, and the need for cleansing with water (a symbol of baptism) in the Mandatum, or washing in Jesus’ washing the feet of His disciples, and in the priest's stripping and washing of the altar. Cleansing, in fact, gave this day of Holy Week the name Maundy Thursday.

- The mass ends in silence with the stripping of the altar. There is *no* dismissal until the end of the First Mass of Easter following The Great Vigil. The services during the Triduum are to be thought of as a unit.
- There is the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament by the people during the night, just as the disciples stayed with the Lord during His agony on the Mount of Olives before the betrayal by Judas.

○ Good Friday

- The events of Good Friday are commemorated in the Stations of the Cross, a 14-step devotion often performed during Lent and especially on Good Friday. The Stations of the Cross are commonly recited on Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent.
- Good Friday is a day of fasting within the Church. Traditionally, there is no Mass and no celebration of the Eucharist on Good Friday. A liturgy may still be performed and communion, if taken, comes from hosts consecrated on Holy Thursday. This is known as the Mass of the Presanctified. Baptism, penance, and anointing of the sick may be performed, but only in unusual circumstances. Church bells are silent. Altars are left bare.

○ Holy Saturday

- Represents the day that Christ “descended into hell” and was not present in the living world.
- There is no mass on this day, nor is there any reception of the Eucharist.

○ The Great Vigil and First Mass of Easter

- This liturgy has its roots in an ancient practice of keeping the Easter feast, during which believers would gather in the hours of darkness ending at

dawn on Easter to hear scripture and offer prayer. This night-long service of prayerful watching anticipated the baptisms that would come at first light and the Easter Eucharist. Easter was the primary baptismal occasion for the early church to the practical exclusion of all others. This practice linked the meanings of Christ's dying and rising to the understanding of baptism.

- The service begins in darkness, sometime between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter, and consists of four parts:
  - The Service of Light (kindling of new fire, lighting the Paschal candle, the Exsultet);
    - The holy water fonts are drained, all the lights are out, the tabernacle is empty. The service begins outside the church. A new fire is lit and blessed.
    - The candle, which symbolizes Christ, the Light of the World, is processed through the church. Everyone lights their candle from the Easter candle and continues in procession until the whole church is alight. In fact, ALL candles are lit from the Paschal candle.
    - The Exultet is then sung. This magnificent hymn, remarkable for its lyric beauty and profound symbolism, announces the dignity and meaning of the mystery of Easter. It tells of man's sin, of God's mercy, and of the great love of the Redeemer for mankind, admonishing us in turn to thank the Trinity for all the graces that have been lavished upon us. (from Catholicculture.org)

- The Service of Lessons (readings from the Hebrew Scriptures interspersed with psalms, canticles, and prayers);
  - These readings help us meditate on the wonderful works of God for his people since the beginning of time.
- Christian Initiation (Holy Baptism) or the Renewal of Baptismal Vows;
  - Making of Easter Water
- The Eucharist (First Mass of Easter)
  - The mass begins gloriously with the proclamation: “Alleluia, Christ is risen!” to which the people respond: “The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!” This moment is marked by the church bursting into light, great organ fanfare, ringing of bells all throughout the church and outside, after which, the *Gloria in excelsis deo* (the Church’s great hymn of praise) is sung.
  - The epistle lesson is read from Romans.
  - Following the epistle is sung The Great Alleluia, an ancient chant sung three times in an increasingly higher tone.
  - Mass continues in the usual fashion.
  - We use Eucharistic Prayer D, which contains elements of the earliest Eucharistic prayers. It is chanted using the Mozarabic Tone, which traces its roots to Spain & Portugal as far back as the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. The chant sounds very much like Islamic chant and is associated with Spanish Catholicism during Islamic rule; however, both the chant



and the rite predate the founding of Islam or its arrival to the Iberian Peninsula.

- The dismissal tonight and all throughout Eastertide ends with the double-Alleluia. The Triduum and Lenten Season are finally ended!

Please join us every Tuesday evening during Lent for a more in depth look at what has been covered here...and more.

### Resources

Ash Wednesday & Lent: <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-life/what-is-ash-wednesday-why-do-christians-celebrate-it.html>

Rose Sunday <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/laetare-Sunday>

Palm Sunday & The Triduum: [www.catholic.org/](http://www.catholic.org/)

Easter Vigil: <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/easter-vigil> & <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=1043>

Mozarabic Chant: <https://www.britannica.com/art/Mozarabic-chant> & [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozarabic\\_chant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozarabic_chant)

## **The Stations of the Cross**

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I. Jesus is condemned to death

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II. Jesus carries His cross

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III. Jesus falls for the first time

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IV. Jesus meets His mother, Mary

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V. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross

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VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

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VII. Jesus falls for the second time

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VIII. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

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IX. Jesus falls for the third time

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X. Jesus is stripped of His clothes

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XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross

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XII. Jesus dies on the cross

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XIII. Jesus is taken down from the cross

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XIV. Jesus is placed in the tomb

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## Prayers for Lent

O gracious Master, infuse in our hearts the spotless light of Your Divine Wisdom and open the eyes of our mind that we may understand the teachings of Your Gospel. Instill in us also the fear of Your blessed commandments, so that having curbed all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing everything to please You. For You, O Christ, our God, are the enlightenment of our souls and bodies; and to You we render glory, together with Your eternal Father, and with Your all holy, life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and forever.

Almighty and Everlasting God,  
You have given the human race  
Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility.  
He fulfilled Your Will by becoming Man  
And giving His life on the Cross.  
Help us to bear witness to You  
By following His example of suffering  
And make us worthy to share in His Resurrection.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son.  
Amen.

### Source

Catholic Online: <https://www.catholic.org/lent/story.php?id=73813>

## **Tuesday Evening Lenten Series**

A Journey through the Season of Lent:

*An exploration into the themes, liturgies, symbols, and practices of  
Lent & Holy Week.*

Tuesdays @ 7 PM in the Rectory.

Potluck dinner. Please bring an item to share.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<i>March 3</i>	What is Lent and why do we observe it?
<i>March 10</i>	The History of Lent and Holy Week
<i>March 17</i>	The Symbols of Lent and Holy Week
<i>March 24</i>	Worship during Lent and Holy Week
<i>March 31</i>	The Liturgies of the Triduum