

LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER AT CHRIST CHURCH —2024

- **The Lenten Season:**

The season of Lent prepares us for Easter. It's the 40 days plus the 6 Sundays before Easter. For centuries, it's been observed as a special time of prayer, self-examination, and repentance. It's a time for concentration on basic values and priorities but isn't a time for self-punishment. Throughout Lent, the worship services of the parish take on a simpler tone, suitable to this season. Banners are removed from churches. Crosses showing the risen Christ are veiled. The word *Alleluia* isn't used. Paraments, if used, are simple. These practices mark the distinctiveness of the season.

- **Observing Lent**

The custom is to mark Lent by giving up and/or taking things on. Both mark the season as a holy preparation time. You could, for example, avoid sweets, meat, and/or alcohol. Giving up something for Lent is even more meaningful by using your money or time for another purpose. For example, mealtimes on fast days could be spent praying—think *The Daily Office* from *The Book of Common Prayer*. If you give up meat, the extra money could be donated to a not-for-profit group, such as *Second Harvest Food Bank*, *Vet Team Six* or *House of Heroes*. Things that could be added to your daily routine are daily Bible reading, fasting on Wednesday and/or Friday, times of prayer or Bible study related to spirituality. Now the Lenten season doesn't include Sundays because that's when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and Sundays are always an appropriate day to lessen Lent's restrictions. So, if you've shunned chocolate, you could eat a candy bar on Sunday. Lent is also an appropriate time for the sacramental rite of confession. While confession to a priest isn't required to receive God's forgiveness, it's a visible rite of reconciliation to God. Call me to set up a time to confess.

- **Special Days and Services**

- **Shrove/Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras—February 13th**—This year the EYC and our College Interns are joining forces to cook pancakes for the parish. All are welcome. This event begins at 6PM in the Parish Hall. By the way, this day is observed throughout the Anglican communion by participating in confession and absolution, the ritual burning of the previous year's Holy Week palms, finalizing one's Lenten sacrifice, as well as eating pancakes and other sweets.

- **Ash Wednesday—February 14th**

This first day of Lent is marked with a special liturgy. The theme, though not for all of Lent, is that we stand as sinners condemned to die, but for God's grace, we live. The imposition of ashes on the forehead, with the words, "*You are dust and to dust you shall return,*" symbolizes this grace-filled survival. In the Old Testament, ashes were a sign of remorse (*feeling regretful at offenses*) and mourning. Ash Wednesday is one of two days of special observance (*the other being Good Friday*) for which fasting is recommended. While this usually refers to going without food for the day, this practice isn't practical for everyone, especially those who are ill. Discern how you can best observe this day. At Christ Church this year, I will be offering **Ashes-To-Go** from 7:30-8:15AM. I will be waiting for you in the College Street parking lot on the east side of the church. All you must do is walk by or drive up, stop apply I'll apply ashes to your forehead. The **Ash Wednesday liturgy**, with communion, will be prayed at 12:15 and 6PM.

- **Wednesdays during Lent**—This year during Lent, I will lead **Holy Eucharist** in church, beginning at 6PM, and using Rite 1. A simple meal will follow. A series of talks on Spiritual Practices follow. [See your insert in the Sunday bulletin for more information about each talk.]

- **Palm Sunday—March 24th, 8 and 10AM**—This Sunday before Easter is the last Sunday in Lent. The day honors Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem including blessing of palms and a procession where those in attendance carry palms, and process around the church, weather permitting, outside. It's

also marked by reading Jesus' passion (*Jesus' suffering and death*). Palms from this day are kept, burned, and used for Ash Wednesday ashes next year.

- **Monday in Holy Week—March 25th, 6PM, Evening Prayer.**
- **Tuesday in Holy Week—March 26th, 6PM, Evening Prayer.**
- **Wednesday in Holy Week—March 27th, 6PM, Stations of the Cross;** a series of narratives, images (icons, drawings, or etchings), and prayers telling Jesus' story of his passion and death by crucifixion on the cross. Praying *The Stations* will be the initial part of evening's worship. The liturgy of Holy Eucharist will follow. There will be no meal or programming this evening.
- **Maundy Thursday—March 28th**
 - **6PM, The Liturgy of Maundy Thursday.** This day reminds us about the Last Supper and comes from the Latin word, *Maundatum*, for commandment or mandate, as Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment; love one another..." During this service feet are normally washed. At the end of the service, the altar is stripped, paraments are take down, and crosses are removed or veiled to mark the solemn occasion. All will leave in silence.
 - **7PM-7AM (March 29th), Night watch Prayer Vigil,** as we come together on this night in an all-night prayer vigil, in remembrance of the disciples *attempting to* keep watch with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Come. Fast as you are able. Keep watch. Pray to Him who loves us and gave Himself for us. This will occur in the nave. Devotional materials will be available. If you can't physically come to the church, you may spend your time in prayer at your home.
- **Good Friday—March 29th, 6PM, Good Friday Liturgy,** where we recall Jesus' day of his death on the cross. It's the second day of special observance where fasting and self-denial is recommended. Eucharist isn't observed after the Maundy Thursday liturgy until the Easter Vigil.
- **Holy Saturday—March 30th, Noon, The Holy Saturday Liturgy.** This liturgy is a series of prayers. There will be no Eucharist.
- **Easter**
 - **Vigil—March 30th, TBD,** This year, we will gather with Christ The King Episcopal Church for the celebration of this ancient liturgy. Let me know if you are interested in volunteering to serve during this service.
 - **Easter Day—March 31st—8 and 10AM, Holy Eucharist, Rite 1 and 2, respectively.**
 - **Easter** is the day we celebrate the feast of Jesus' resurrection. According to the Venerable Bede—an early English historian—the word Easter comes from the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess *Eostre*. Christians in England applied the word to the principal festival of the church year, day and season.
 - **Easter** is the annual feast of the resurrection, the *Pascha* or Christ's passion, and the eighth day of cosmic creation. Faith in Jesus' resurrection on the Sunday or third day following his crucifixion is at the heart of Christian belief. Easter sets the experience of springtime next to the ancient stories of deliverance and the proclamation of the risen Christ. In the west, Easter occurs on the first Sunday after the full moon on or after the vernal equinox. Easter always falls between March 22nd and April 25th inclusive. Following Jewish custom, the feast begins at sunset on Easter Eve with the Great Vigil of Easter. Eastern Orthodox Church celebrate Easter on the first Sunday after the Jewish *Pesach* or Passover (*which follows the spring full moon*). Although the two dates sometimes coincide, the eastern date is often one or more weeks later.
- So, there you have it. With the information provided by the Formation Ministry, you know what, where, and why of our Lent, Holy Week and Easter Day events. There are many opportunities to learn, fast, pray and worship, as God commanded us, "You shall have no other gods before Me."—Exodus 20:3.

- In the New Testament, Jesus reiterates the significance of worship, emphasizing that true worshipers must worship God in spirit and truth.

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23-24). This indicates that worship is not merely a ritualistic act, but a genuine expression of the heart and a recognition of God’s truth and character.

- Additionally, the Apostle Paul writes,
- *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”* (Romans 12:1)

In this verse he urges believers to offer themselves as living sacrifices, which he describes as their spiritual act of worship. This shows that worship goes beyond formal ceremonies or religious practices and involves living a life that pleases God.

--Grace and Peace, Fr Hal