

Holy Week

Palm Sunday (5th April)

This Sunday before Easter is the last Sunday of Lent and the first day in Holy Week. The Liturgy remembers Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem through the blessing of palm crosses and a procession about the church. This day is also marked by the reading or singing of the story of Jesus' Passion (the word used to describe Jesus' death comes from 'suffering', which is one old meaning of passion). Some of the Palm Sunday palms are kept and used to make the Ash Wednesday ashes for next year. The evening service is a special time for reflection and saying 'sorry' to God.

Maundy Thursday (9th April)

This is the Thursday in Holy Week that begins the Triduum – the Three Holy Days which take us through Jesus's Last Supper with His disciples, His death and resurrection.

The name 'Maundy' comes from the Latin word 'mandatum' for 'commandment.' At the Last Supper Jesus spoke to His disciples and said, "I give you a new commandment; that you love one another..." This is shown in symbol when the priest washes the feet of a number of the congregation, as Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. At the conclusion of the Mass altars are stripped of any ornamentation and crosses are removed to mark the solemnity of the occasion. There is then a time of quiet before the 'Altar of Repose' as we remember how Jesus waited in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest.

Good Friday (10th April)

The Friday in Holy Week - Good Friday - is a time to remember that Jesus suffered and died. In the afternoon at the time when Jesus died on the cross there is a service which focusses on that terrible moment through the singing of the Gospel and special prayers, veneration of the cross and communion. This is the second day of special observance when abstinence is recommended.

The Easter Vigil (11th April)

This Mass occurs after sunset on Holy Saturday (the day after Good Friday). This was the traditional time of baptism in the early centuries of Christianity: and this tradition of the early Church is still followed. We begin in darkness and a new fire is lit, from which the Easter (Paschal) Candle is lighted. This signifies the light of Christ coming into the world anew at the resurrection. The service follows the early form of a number of readings (like the Christmas Nine Lessons and Carols) after which the 'Gloria' is sung for the first time since the start of Lent and then the normal sequence of the Mass. In this way we begin the joyful celebration of the Great Fifty Days of Easter (and then we party).

St Gabriel's, Pimlico 2020



The devil tempts Jesus, Rembrandt

What we do in Lent and why

WHAT IS LENT?

Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness as a preparation for His ministry (Luke 4.1-13). This was a time of prayer and fasting and when He was tempted to turn away from God and God's plan to bring mankind back to His love. The season of Lent mirrors that time of preparation over the forty weekdays and six Sundays before Easter. For centuries people have used Lent as the time to look at their lives more carefully, to turn away from what is wrong and to try to live a better life. God has given us Lent as a chance to give more time to fundamental values and priorities, and to restore our relationship with God. Lent (length = grow) is not a time for self-punishment but for growth.

Throughout Lent, the worship of the Church is simpler than usual. The word "alleluia" is not used in our services. Crosses and statues may be veiled, and flowers removed. The singing may be unaccompanied by the organ. These practices help us mark this season of renewal as a special time in the Church's year.

WHAT WE DO IN LENT

Many people know about Lent from the custom of giving up some things and taking on others. This reminds us that God is at the centre of our lives and so trains our thoughts and bodies to put Him first. Among the things we might give up for Lent are sweets, meat for some or all meals, and alcohol. In most cases, giving up something for Lent can benefit the wider community by using the money or time saved for another purpose. For example, mealtimes on fast days could be spent in prayer. Another example is that the money saved by eating less meat can be given to a charity which works to end hunger worldwide.

We may also use Lent to make ourselves more open to God through daily Bible reading, fasting on Fridays, times of prayer, and taking part in the Parish Lent Study Group.

Note that the season of Lent is forty days plus the six Sundays. Because Sunday is always a celebration of Jesus' resurrection it is an appropriate day to lessen the restrictions of Lent (especially Mothering Sunday after which we may make our Lent stricter).

Lent is also a good time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation ('confession'). The chance to be reconciled to God through this sacrament is regularly available throughout Lent at St Gabriel's. There are also other opportunities for personal spiritual development.

And ... remember, if you don't begin your Lent activities on Day One, that doesn't mean you can't start them later in the season.

FASTING

Fasting - giving up some food for the whole of Lent, not eating meat or drinking alcohol on Fridays. In addition, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are **Days of Abstinence** - we have one full meal and two snacks only. These rules are not required of under-sixteens, pensioners, pregnant women, the sick, or those involved in heavy manual labour.

SPECIAL DAYS AND SERVICES

Shrove Tuesday (Tuesday 25th February)

This is the day before Lent begins. The day is named for the 'shriving' or confessing of sins that is traditional on this day before beginning Lent.

This day is also known as Mardi Gras, or 'Fat Tuesday', because it was a time to eat the things from which we would abstain during Lent. Pancake suppers are traditional way to use up some of the ingredients not needed during Lent.

Ash Wednesday (Wednesday 26th February)

The first day of Lent is marked with a special service ('liturgy'). The theme for the day is repentance: we are sinners who have turned from the life God offers us, but by God's grace (especially in the resurrection of Jesus) we can turn back to God and away from our sins. This is symbolized by the marking with ('imposition of') ashes on the forehead, accompanied by the words, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return, repent and believe the Gospel." In the Old Testament, ashes were a sign of penitence (feeling regretful at offences) and mourning.

Ash Wednesday is one of two days of special observance (the other being Good Friday) for which Abstinence is recommended. While this usually refers to going without food for the entire day, this practice is not practical for all people, including, but not limited to, diabetics. Use your own discretion in determining how you can best observe this day ... but do observe it.

Stations of the Cross

These are depictions of 14 incidents in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death from the trial before Pilate to Him being placed in the tomb. They are used for the service called the Stations of the Cross, which visits each station (or stopping point) in church with a brief reading, response, prayer and meditation. Stations of the Cross often take place on Fridays in Lent - in memory of Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified.

Stations of the Cross are shared in Lent with our brothers and sisters in other churches. The service begins at 7 p.m.. Please check the website or newsheet for where each week's service takes place.