

THE LENTEN SEASON MEANING AND MEAN TO ALL CHRISTIANS!!!!

March 30, 2011

The Meaning of Lent

Season of Sacrifice, Prayer, and Almsgiving Before Easter Sunday

Feb 16, 2009 [Karen Plumley](#)



Meaning of Lent for Christians - *Jane M. Sawyer*

The 40 days of Lent leading up to Easter Sunday, including Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, and ending in the Holy Triduum are considered the centerpiece of Christian religion

The six and one-half weeks (40 days) preceding Easter Sunday and the resurrection of Jesus Christ are known as Lent and hold significant meaning in the Christian faith. Western Christians are asked to prepare for Lent on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday by listing their [Lenten plans](#). These may include daily fasting (or other sacrifices), prayer, and almsgiving.

The number 40 is a particularly meaningful one for Christians: Jews spent 40 years in the desert traveling to the Promised Land and also, Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights fasting before beginning his ministry. Early on, because fasting was not allowed on Sundays, there were only 36 fasting days in Lent. To increase the number of days to 40, the Church altered the length of Lent by adding four more days: Ash Wednesday and the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday afterward.

Mardi Gras - Fat Tuesday

It all begins with Mardi Gras (literally “Fat Tuesday”, or “Shrove Tuesday”), in which Christians get ready for the sacrifices and fasting ahead. Feasting and celebration ensues, but is only a small part of the day before Lent. Christians make a special point to review and modify their Lenten plans and also focus on their lives, asking God what improvements they can make in order to move closer to Him. Many will also confess their sins on this day.

Ash Wednesday and the Beginning of Lent

Many Christians of the Catholic faith attend church on Ash Wednesday and receive ashes on their foreheads in the shape of a cross, an ancient tradition carried on to this day. The ashes are a symbol of atonement and mortality and are the product of the burned palm leaves from the previous year's Palm Sunday masses.

The 40 Days of Lent

During the next 40 days, Christians will perform their Lenten plans and resolutions. Some give up sweets or alcohol, others may forgo watching TV. Today, the Lenten sacrifices are a personal choice but are expected to be a true sacrifice for God.

Additionally, almsgiving may include donating food, toys, and other supplies to a local charity, becoming involved in charitable work with the Church, or helping out at the town Senior Center or a children's hospital. Again, almsgiving is a personal choice for Christians.

Finally, regular prayer and mass attendance is also a part of the daily Lent experience for Christians as they attempt to listen to the Holy Spirit within, ask for forgiveness for past transgressions, and strengthen their faith.

Read on

- [Planning 2010 Lenten Devotions](#)
- [The History of Pancake Day and Shrove Tuesday](#)
- [Detailed Lent and Easter Timeline](#)

Palm Sunday and the Passion of the Christ

The Sunday prior to Easter Sunday begins the holiest week of the year for Christians. During Palm Sunday mass, attendees receive palm leaves, which are a symbol of Jesus and the victory of his faithful followers over their enemies.

Attendees at Palm Sunday mass will also listen to a reading of the Passion according to Matthew, Mark, or Luke (three of the four biblical accounts of the death of Christ, rotated each year). The fourth version of the Passion, written by John, is always read on Good Friday.

The Triduum – The Three Holiest Days of Easter Season

Lent ends when Triduum begins on Holy Thursday, the day before the crucifixion of Christ known as Good Friday. There is a special mass on Thursday evening in celebration of Jesus' Last Supper before His arrest and crucifixion. It is said that many years ago, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples before the Last Supper in an act of kindness. The "Washing of the Feet" has traditionally been a part of this special mass.

On Good Friday, many Christians attend a church liturgy to mourn the loss of Jesus and listen to the Passion according to John. On Holy Saturday, the day before Easter, many who are preparing to enter into the Catholic faith will visit their future church and pray. Those who are already members reflect upon their sacrifices and think about how Lent has made them better Christians.

Beyond Lent, Easter Sunday is the most joyous and anticipated day of the year for Christians. Easter is a time for leaving sacrifices/mourning behind in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Symbols of rebirth and new life abound such as Easter eggs, parades, the whiteness of spring shoes, flowery bonnets, and other Easter traditions. Christians everywhere rejoice and gather in celebration with loved ones on this holiest of holidays.

Note: In the Eastern Christian tradition, Lent begins on "Clean Monday" and ends on the Friday before Palm Sunday, with all Sundays included in the fasting days.

Ref.: <http://anobayan.i.ph/>