

Preparing for Holy Week

Palm Sunday (24th March)

This Sunday before Easter is the last Sunday of Lent. The Liturgy commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem with a blessing of palm crosses and a procession into church. This day is also marked by the reading 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.

Maunder Thursday (28th March)

This is the Thursday in 'Holy Week' (that is, the week leading up to Easter). The day is a time for remembering Jesus' Last Supper.

Its name comes from the Latin word 'mandatum' for 'commandment', as Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment; that you love one another..." - this is reflected symbolically by the priest washing the feet of a number of the congregation, as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. At the conclusion of this Mass, altars are stripped of any ornamentation and crosses are removed to mark the solemnity of the occasion.

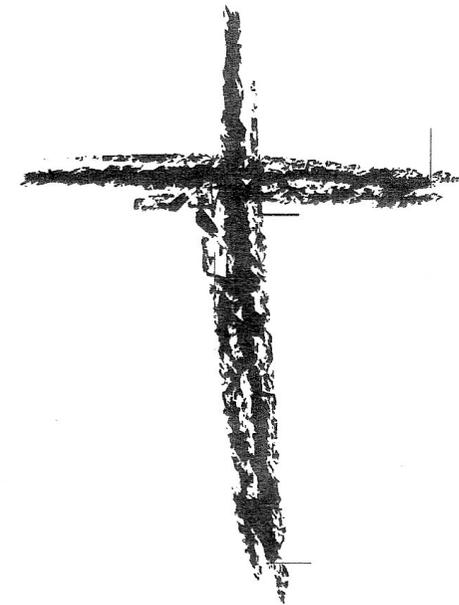
Good Friday (29th March)

The Friday in Holy Week—Good Friday—is a time for remembering Jesus suffering and death. Traditionally there is a service in the afternoon, as Jesus hung on the cross from noon until 3pm. This is the second day of special observance when fasting is recommended.

The Easter Vigil (30th March)

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. It signifies the light of Christ coming into the world anew at the resurrection. We begin the joyful celebration of the Great Fifty Days of Easter.

THE PARISH OF ST GABRIEL PIMLICO



Keeping a Holy Lent 2013

PREPARING FOR LENT

What is Lent?

Lent is a season of preparation leading up to Easter. It is the forty days (reflecting Jesus' time in the desert) plus the six Sundays before Easter. For centuries, it has been observed as a special time of self-examination and penitence. Lent is a time for concentration on fundamental values and priorities, a time for restoring our right relationship with God—it is not a time for self punishment.

Throughout Lent, the worship of the Church takes on a simply tone, appropriate to the season. The word "alleluia" is not used in the words of the Liturgy or hymns. Crosses may be veiled, and flowers removed. The singing may be unaccompanied by the organ. These practices help us as a worshipping community to mark this season of renewal as a special time in the Church's year.

Observing Lent

The custom is to mark the season of Lent by giving up some things and taking on others. Both can serve to mark the season as a holy time of preparation. Some examples of things people give up for Lent include sweets, meat for some or all meals, and alcohol. In most cases, giving up something for Lent can be made more meaningful by using the money or time for another purpose. For example, meal times on fast days could be spent in prayer. Another example is that if one gives up meat during Lent, the extra money that would go to meat dishes can be given to a charity which works to end hunger worldwide. Useful things added during Lent are 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. This is because Sundays are always celebrations of Jesus' resurrection and are always an appropriate day to lessen the restrictions of Lent.

Lent is also an especially appropriate time for the sacrament of reconciliation (or confession). The chance to be reconciled to God through this sacrament is regularly available throughout Lent. There are also other opportunities for personal spiritual development.

SPECIAL DAYS AND SERVICES

Shrove Tuesday (Tuesday 12th February)

This is actually 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 for eating the things from which one would abstain during Lent. Pancake suppers are traditional as they are a way of using up some of the ingredients not needed during Lent.

Ash Wednesday (Wednesday 13th February)

The first day of Lent is marked with a special Liturgy. The theme for the day, though not for all Lent, is that we stand as sinners condemned to die, but for God's grace (especially in the resurrection of Jesus). This is symbolized by the imposition of ashes on the forehead, with the words, "remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." 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 fasting 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 Way of the Cross, which visits each station in church with a brief reading, response, prayer and meditation. Stations of the Cross occur on Fridays in Lent—the day Jesus was crucified.