

## Celebrating Lent and Easter 2025

Easter is a journey rather than a single event. It is a journey that takes us from Ash Wednesday through to Passion, or Palm, Sunday and Holy Week to the cross on Good Friday and to the joyous discovery that the tomb is empty and that Christ is risen on Easter Day. There are then 50 days of Easter that lead us to Pentecost.

There will be many opportunities in the life of the parish over this time to worship, study, pray, eat, fast, and journey together. Not all such opportunities will be possible or attractive to you. I would strongly suggest that you at least join in Ash Wednesday, Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and of course Easter Day to get the sense of journey.

That is quite a commitment and requires some planning in terms of balancing your other commitments. If you have already made arrangements to be away over Easter then talk to me about where you might worship while away (it is possible to have Easter and holidays!) or you may like to plan some simple prayers and rituals of your own that honour the season. Whether away or at home Lent and Easter are seasons of the soul which can be experienced in many aspects of our life.

*“Easter, with its grace of interior resurrection, is the radical healing of the human condition. Lent, which prepares us for this grace, is about what needs to be healed.” (Thomas Keating ,OSB, The Mystery of Christ)*

The following are but a few suggestions of how we can celebrate Lent and Easter both together and in the privacy of our own homes and hearts.

**LENT:** is traditionally a season in which we increase our prayers, fasting and almsgiving. We do this in order to demonstrate repentance, an awareness of our failures before God and a deep desire to be made whole. We also want to reduce the amount of distraction in our lives. And we want to share God's goodness with others as we are very aware of our shared flawed nature with all others. These disciplines prepare us for the liberation of the resurrection.

*Prayer:* It is good to spend some time in prayer every day. Whatever your current practice is consider changing it a little during this season. If you normally pray last thing at night try getting up a few minutes earlier and praying in the morning. If you are looking for a prayer to focus your attention, consider the collects in your pew sheet. Of course Morning and Evening Prayer in your green prayer books are a very good resource. Please feel free to take one home (just remember to bring it back afterward!) Please also consider the little book of personal devotions. Or if you have a computer there are many on line sites such as Sacred Space. We never pray entirely alone for always, somewhere in the world, we are upheld by others in prayer.

***Fasting:*** few people fast these days for the whole of Lent but many people give up a particular food or drink that they like. You will need to decide if this brings you closer to God or creates a distraction! The two days which are most traditional days of fasting are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. A simple fast between sunrise and sunset is within most people's capacity (but some health conditions would make it unwise). Or you can simply remove meat from your diet on these two days and maybe Fridays.

***Almsgiving:*** this year there are at least two wonderful opportunities to increase our giving to others. Firstly there are the special envelopes for ABM and the Good Friday appeal for Jerusalem. Secondly you can link your fasting with almsgiving. Every time you have a coffee, or other designated treat, you put aside an equal amount of money for mission giving. Alternately you put aside the money you save by not having the said treat and give that.

***Study:*** books are available for personal devotions each day and there is the option of a group study once a week to explore the meanings of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

***Confession or Reconciliation:*** every Sunday we collectively confess we have sinned and are in need of forgiveness. There are times in life when it may be desirable to confess your sins in private. Lent is one of the times of the year when we may be particularly aware of our need for forgiveness. This can be organised with myself.

**EASTER:** is a season and not a single event. The following are the major liturgical points in that journey.

*Ash Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March at 10:00 am* we burn last year's palm crosses and we are marked as God's own people with that ash. It is a time of recognising our mortality and our need for forgiveness. This service orientates us toward the cross and journey that lies ahead.

*The Five Sundays of Lent:* Each Sunday has a different theme as we prepare for the Passion of our Lord. We have our Sunday morning service at 9:30 a.m.

*Passion (or Palm) Sunday:* This day recalls Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. It marks the beginning of the great and Holy Week of the Christian year.

### **The Three Great Days of Easter – The Triduum**

*Maundy Thursday:* On this night we remember our Lord's life of humble service in the washing of feet (and hands). We celebrate the Eucharist and reserve the sacraments. We strip the altar and make bare the church as we prepare for Good Friday. **17<sup>th</sup> April at 6:00 p.m.**

*Good Friday:* We celebrate the "Solemn Liturgy of the Passion and Death of our Lord" and confront the enormity of the cross. **18<sup>th</sup> 9:30 a.m.**

*Easter Sunday:* At dawn (6:00 a.m.) we welcome the risen Son as we light the paschal candle. And then at 9:30 all joy erupts! **20<sup>th</sup> April.**

*Fifty Days of Easter:* we celebrate for fifty days, or seven weeks, the new life that we find in the risen Lord. This culminates in **Pentecost** on **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June.**