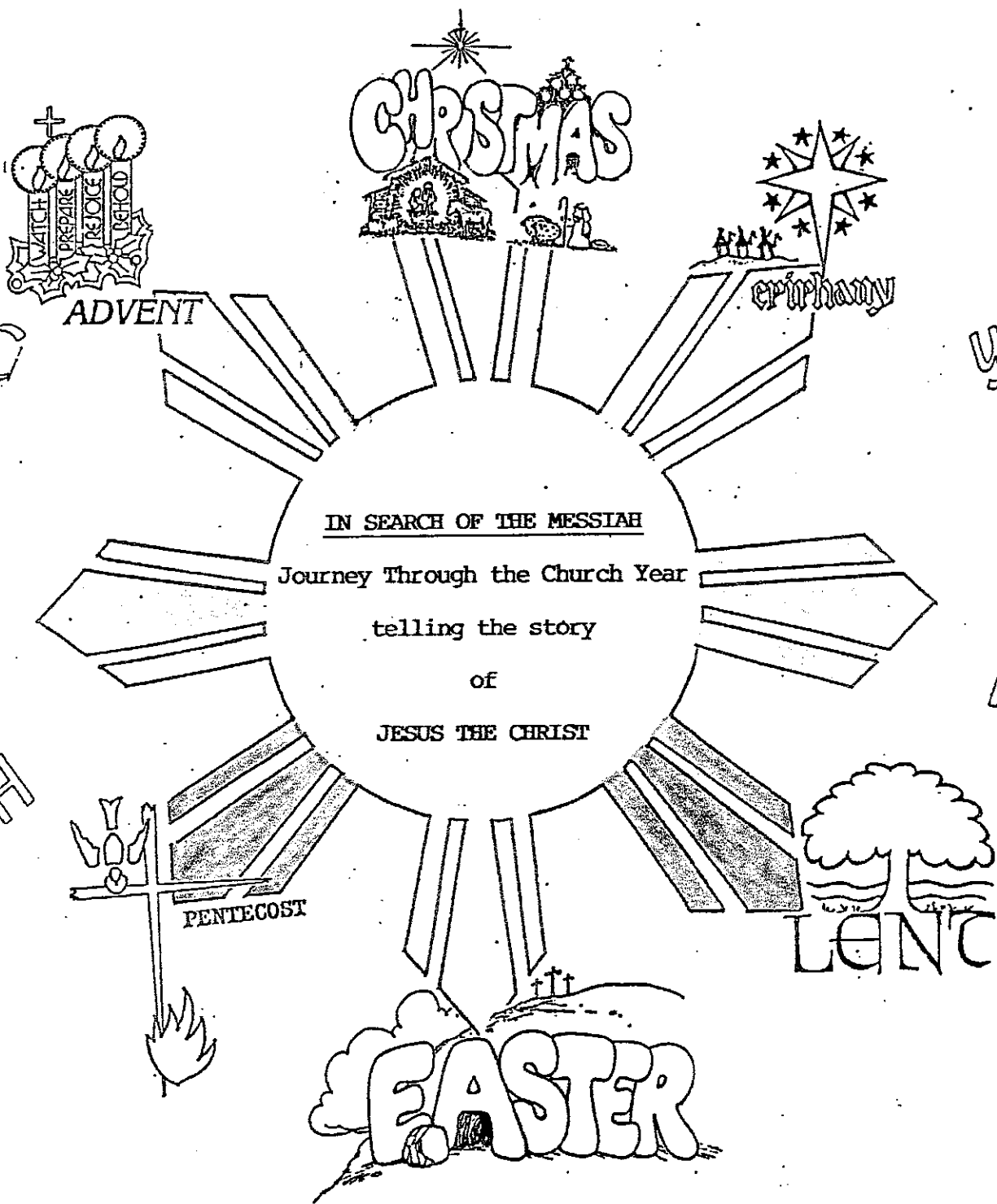


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IN SEARCH OF THE MESSIAH

Journey Through the Church Year

telling the story

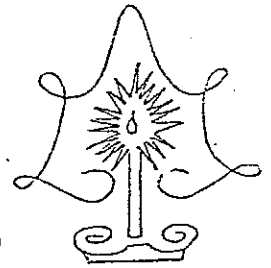
of

JESUS THE CHRIST

 *Rev. Amy E. Shaw*  
1703 37<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Canton, Ohio 44709  
330-309-6114 miriam7@att.net  
or [starfish0107@yahoo.com](mailto:starfish0107@yahoo.com)



## GUIDE FOR PERSONAL/FAMILY DEVOTIONS



Opening Reflection (designed to be used as litany if in a family or group)

Leader: Lent is here...

Response: - a season to remember that we are people of God called Christian.

Leader: Lent - a season to remember why we are people of God called Christian.

Response: Lent - a season to remember that Jesus calls us.

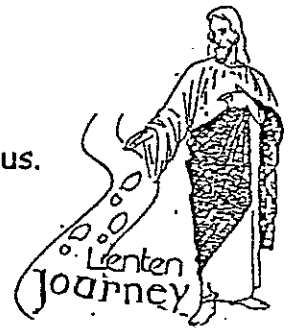
Leader: Jesus calls us right now, everyday;  
we are called to live as Jesus lived...

Response: To love as Jesus loved, to give as Jesus gave.

Leader: We are called to follow the way, the truth, and the life  
That leads to God - Jesus the Christ.

Response: Lent is here...

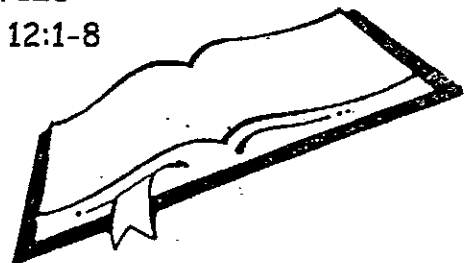
let us remember, follow and give thanks.

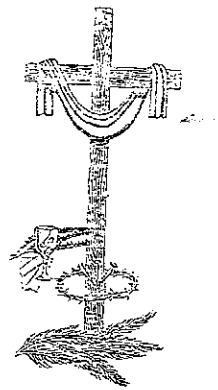


Scripture ( read the scripture for the week/day. Read aloud and try different translations noticing differences in ways passages are worded.)

### LECTIONARY TEXTS FOR THE SEASON OF LENT, YEAR C

Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:1-2,12-17 II Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Psalm 51:1-17 Matthew 6:1-6,16-21
First Sunday of Lent	Deuteronomy 26:1-11 Romans 10:8b-13	Psalm 91:1-2,9-16 Luke 4:1-13
Second Sunday of Lent	Genesis 15:1-12,17-18 Philippians 3:17-4:1	Psalm 27 Luke 13:1-13
Third Sunday of Lent	Isaiah 55:1-9 I Corinthians 10:1-13	Psalm 63:1-8 Luke 13:1-9
Fourth Sunday of Lent	Joshua 5:9-12 II Corinthians 5:16-21	Psalm 32 Luke 15:1-3,11b-32
Fifth Sunday of Lent	Isaiah 43:16-21 Philippians 3:4b-14	Psalm 126 John 12:1-8





## HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday	Luke 19:28-40 Isaiah 50:4-9a Philippians 2:5-11	Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Psalm 31:9-16 Luke 19:41-48
Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday		
Monday:	Isaiah 42:1-9 Psalm 36:5-11	Hebrews 9:11-15 John 12:1-11
Tuesday:	Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 71:1-14	I Corinthians 1:18-31 John 12:20-36
Wednesday:	Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 70	Hebrews 12:1-3 John 13:21-32
Maundy Thursday	Exodus 12:1-14 I Corinthians 11:23-26	Psalm 116:1-4,12-19 Luke 22:1-39
Good Friday	Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Hebrews 10:16-25	Psalm 22 Luke 22:40-23:56
Saturday (selected from Easter Vigil readings)	Genesis 1:1-2:4a Psalm 33	Romans 6:3-11 Luke 24:1-12

### Hymn

(check Lenten/Holy Week section of the hymnal - select a hymn to read or sing.)

Prayer (if in a family or group) - encourage each member to:

- offer prayers of thanks
- offer prayers of blessing for self and loved ones (by name, if possible)
- offer prayers of healing for someone ill, comfort for someone in grief  
(using when possible, names of people the family knows, or prayer list from Sunday bulletin)
- offer prayers of joy to celebrate good things and experiences that have occurred during the day or week



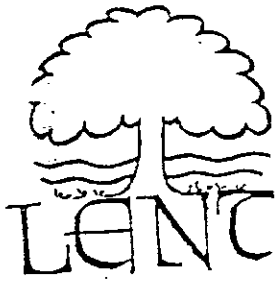
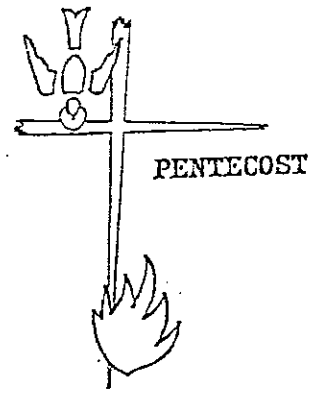
Lord's Prayer (rotate use of debts/debtors, sins and trespasses as you pray)  
(try a sung/chant version you will find in the hymnal)

### Benediction

Go into this day/week, blessed to be a blessing.  
In the name of the One and Living God:  
Loving Creator, Indwelling Christ, Nurturing Spirit.  
Go into this day/week with the wholeness and peace of God's Shalom



## SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR



### Lent - Easter - Pentecost Cycle THE SEASON OF LENT Introduction

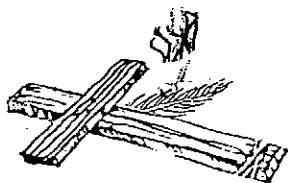
#### Lent

by Ann Weems, Kneeling in Jerusalem

Lent is a time to take time  
to let the power of our faith story take hold of us,  
a time to let the events  
get up and walk around us,  
a time to intensify  
our living unto Christ,  
a time to hover over  
the thoughts of our hearts,  
a time to place our feet in the streets of Jerusalem  
or walk along the sea and listen to his word,  
a time to touch his robe  
and feel the healing surge through us,  
a time to ponder and a time to wonder...  
Lent is a time to allow a fresh new taste of God!

The heart of the Christian way of life is our participation in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. The first celebration of the Christian year was the Easter Triduum/ The Paschal Event/ The Great Three Days.

This event began at sunset on Maundy Thursday/Upper Room-Last Supper through sunset of Easter Day/ Resurrection of the Christ. As years past, the church felt the need for expanding the celebration and a whole week/ Holy Week was set aside to begin on Palm Sunday through Easter Day. Eventually the celebration was expanded to include a time of preparation which we call Lent.



The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and goes for forty days not including the six Sundays, and ending with the Great Sabbath, Easter Eve. Since every Sunday is considered a little Easter, they are not included in the forty days. The forty days of Lent are symbolic of Jesus' trial and preparation in the wilderness after his baptism and before the beginning of his ministry. The origin of the word "Lent" is from the Anglo-Saxon word "Lencten" meaning "spring."

The primary liturgical color of Lent is purple and signifies repentance, humility and suffering. Sunday worship takes on a different look in its observance and content. Visual arts may include, besides the liturgical color on altar, pulpit and lectern, a wooden cross and/or other symbols of the season. Signs of Spring like pussy willows, forsythia, or other budding foliage may be used in floral presentations.

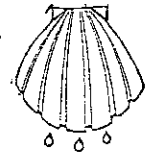
The worship service takes on a tension between the penitential nature of the season and the remembrance that every Sunday is Easter Sunday. Thus the service includes experiences which highlight the uniqueness of the season. The use of silence is increased and most often the silent processional, involving acolytes, cross bearer, choir and worship leaders, sets the tone and reflective atmosphere of the service.

Time for personal and corporate prayers of confession are added, if not usually a part of the service. Hymns and service music do not include the use of alleluia and gloria. Each of these expressions is a way of helping us to take more seriously the meaning of Lent and our involvement in it.

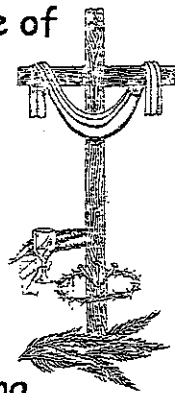
Lent is often recognized through the disciplines of prayer, study and fasting. It is a time when we intentionally reflect upon what our Christianity means in our everyday lives.



It is particularly a time when families can come together to examine the meaning of their faith as they live it. Lent is a time when we can look at values and set priorities for intentional Christian living. It is also a time for evangelism and renewing the baptismal covenant. From early church times, the season was used as the preparation time for converts and others preparing for baptism and confirmation. It is important to remember that these experiences were not considered private individual experiences but rather the corporate community.



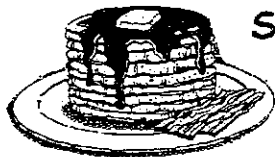
Often Lent is observed only by the "giving up" of something, It is hoped that in this season one might find oneself "giving to" something more meaningful and ongoing than "giving up" something for a brief period of time. When persons "give up" something for Lent (most often food items), the money not spent is gathered together and "given to" a favorite charity or mission project. In our day, when often persons, for health reasons, cannot "give up" or fast from food, other things like TV are "given up" and that time "given to" study, prayer, acts of loving-kindness to shutins or others with special needs. Thus the discipline of the season of Lent is to give oneself to study, worship, and self-reflection. This season offers an intentional time of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation for persons and communities.



Lent is an important family time both in the home and in the church. The nuclear family enables children to experience their first encounters with acceptance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and belonging that is central to the Gospel. It is the family ( nuclear and corporate) that enables children to see Christianity lived out daily and learn what it means to be a member of the community of faith.

As we move through the season of Lent, our journey involving prayer, worship and study provides us a unique opportunity as individuals and a community of faith to deepen our appreciation for and involvement in the Paschal Mystery.

Our liturgy/ "work of the people of God" becomes the occasion for a richer Christ-centered spirituality to emerge and develop. Lent is a season for intensity of purpose, however, the disciplines in which we engage should not exhaust, but rather sustain and refresh us, so that we come to the celebration of the Easter event with new life, energy and joy.



## SPECIAL DAYS IN THE LENTEN SEASON

### Shrove Tuesday

During the Middle Age, Christians would attend church on the day before the beginning of Lent. They would ask forgiveness for their sins in order to enter the Lenten season with a fresh start. They called this forgiveness being "shriven." It is from this word that we get Shrove Tuesday.

Pancakes are one of the special foods eaten on Shrove Tuesday. At that time, Lent was kept by not using any meat for forty days. Shrove Tuesday and the eating of pancakes was a way of using the last of the lard and fat drippings.

### Ash Wednesday



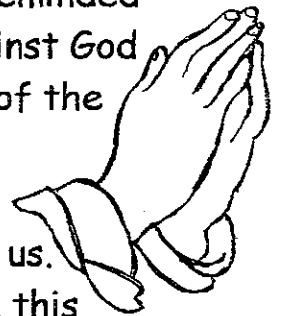
Ash Wednesday is the first day in the season of Lent. Its name comes from a service of the church in which the priest or pastor places ashes upon the forehead of each person, saying "Repent and receive the Gospel." The tradition, which grew out of the references to sackcloth and ashes ( since early times, symbolic of repentance for sin and of grief in mourning) has a significant history in both Jewish and Christian worship. In many ways, the imposition of ashes becomes a powerful nonverbal and experiential way of calling us to repentance and reconciliation.

Ash Wednesday becomes in many respects, the Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement for the Christian community. The season of Lent, which follows, reflects in some ways the 10 Days of Awe (which proceeds Yom Kippur). During the 10 Days of Awe, persons reflect upon their lives and ways in which they have sinned against others and others against them, and they intentionally seek (by letters or personal contact) to forgive others and receive forgiveness from others. In this way they come to Yom Kippur prepared to receive forgiveness from God. One is reminded that the Day of Atonement atones only for sins committed against God not for sins committed against one another. This is reflective of the phrase in the Lord's Prayer

"forgive us our debts/sins/trespases

as we forgive our debtors/those who sin/trespass against us.

Perhaps we might take seriously, during the forty days of Lent, this opportunity to offer to others, and receive from others, these gifts of forgiveness and reconciliation.



✱ Ash Wednesday presents a dual emphasis to the day - confronting our mortality and confessing our sins. Thus the use of ashes is a symbol of our mortality, sorrow and repentance in preparation to emphasize the opportunity we have for spiritual growth, renewal and reconciliation.

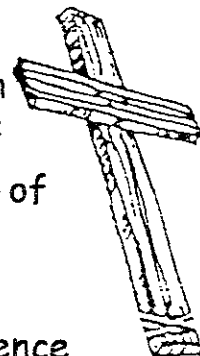
The ashes for the service are made by burning some of the palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday. The connection of Palm Sunday and Ash Wednesday is appropriate because Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly and this led him quickly to his death. In some churches, persons are given slips of paper on which they write sins for which they seek forgiveness. These papers are collected and placed in an urn and burned. The ashes are then used for the mark of the ashes.



The Ash Wednesday service environment should be solemn and stark. Along with the traditional liturgical color purple, grays and other earth tones are appropriate as well as fabrics with rough, coarse textures. The tone and atmosphere of the liturgy are somber and meditative.



The introduction of silence heightens the tenor of the season and often includes a silent procession of worship participants (acolytes, cross bearer, choir, clergy, etc.). The cross may become a focal worship center by placing it in a floor stand in the chancel area. It is often draped with the colors of the season (grey, light to dark shades of purple, black, white, red) as the season progresses toward the Day of Pentecost.

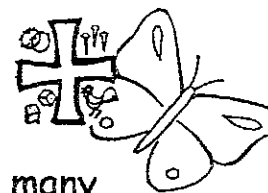


The central ingredients of the service are reading of scripture, silence, prayer, receiving ashes and often receiving communion. Silent recessions may also be used at the close of the service. The people depart in silence to begin their journey toward Easter. In many church communities, additional lenten studies and services, often held on Wednesdays, focus on spiritual formation and renewal.



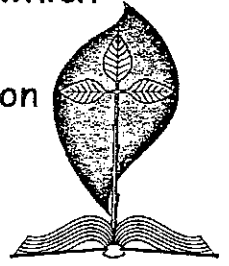
## The Sundays in Lent

The processional introduced in the Ash Wednesday service often continues through the first five Sundays of Lent as a reminder that these Sundays, while reflective of Easter, are indeed different. As indicated above, The worship service takes on a tension between the penitential nature of the season and the remembrance that every Sunday is Easter Sunday.



The First Sunday in Lent is of special significance because a great many people are not present at the Ash Wednesday observance. Whether Ash Wednesday has been observed or not, the call to repentance is repeated on the First Sunday in Lent clearly enough to be heard by those who were not involved on Ash Wednesday and yet not redundant for those who were. The traditional lectionary text each year for this service is the story recounting the 40 days Jesus spent being tempted in the wilderness. We are called to examine the way we live out our faith and commit ourselves to the spiritual disciplines of the season.

The first five Sundays in Lent are more subdued than usual but are not simply one long Holy Week. Thus the services include experiences which highlight the uniqueness of the season, focusing on the themes of penitence, baptism and renewal, and new life in Christ. This focus, on spiritual growth and the deepening of one's faith experience, is essential to prepare oneself for celebrating the Paschal Mystery.



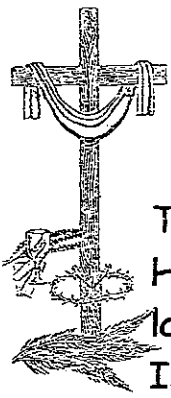
Time for personal and corporate prayers of confession are added, if not usually a part of the service and the use of silence may be increased. Hymns and service music do not include the use of alleluia and gloria. The visuals take a less somber tone than Ash Wednesday, often building on the natural new growth indicative of the Spring season around us. Each of these expressions is a way of helping us to take more seriously the meaning of Lent and our involvement in it.



The worship space may take on a different look. Visual arts, in addition to the liturgical color purple (signifying repentance, humility and suffering), may include a wooden cross (introduced on Ash Wednesday), banners/hangings, and other symbols of the season, which illuminate the lectionary stories as they unfold. Signs of Spring like pussy willows, forsythia, or other budding foliage may be used in floral presentations.

Worship during the Lenten season also opens the opportunity to highlight the crucial place the Eucharist or Holy Communion has in our spiritual formation. For those churches where the sacrament is a weekly observance, there may not be a change, but in churches where less frequent observance occurs, then offering the bread and cup on a weekly basis within or after the worship service may prove meaningful to those who partake. Although we are recovering the experience of communion as a joyous celebration of all of God's saving work in Christ, the more solemn and penitential understanding of the bread and cup has an important place during Lent. Many times, the use of pita bread can add to this shift in emphasis of the communion experience.





## HOLY WEEK



The colors and other visuals used during Lent may continue through Holy Week or additional symbols such as a crown of thorns, whip, ladder, sponge, spears, nails, etc. may be added as the week progresses. In some tradition, beginning with Palm/Passion Sunday, a very deep red may be added to symbolize the blood of Christ. Crosses may be veiled for all or part of the week and no flowers used.

In some traditions services are held each day of the week spreading out the passion narratives of the four Gospels to correspond with the days. Full participation in the events of Holy Week whether celebrated each day or just two, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, will enable the worshipers to experience the impact of the story upon their lives.



## SPECIAL DAYS IN HOLY WEEK



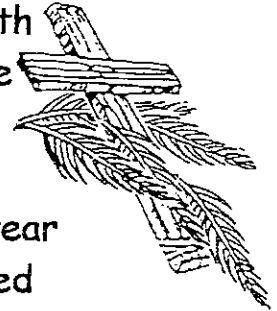
### Palm/Passion Sunday

Palm/Passion Sunday is by the very nature of the day - dramatic. It is filled with Scripture as the events of the passion unfold. Dramatic readings of the story may be done in a variety of ways with one or many readers participating. Because the experience of Palm Sunday quickly changes to the events of Good Friday, this day is not particularly suitable for celebrating baptism, confirmation or reception of new members. These experiences should instead be part of the celebration of Easter and the Great Fifty Days which follow leading to the Day of Pentecost.

Palm/Passion Sunday is a day of contrasts - from the joyous celebration of apparent loyalty to Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem to the tragedy which occurs a mere few days later in the crucifixion of Jesus as a common criminal. The worshiper is confronted with his/her own participation in the triumphal entry and subsequent passion of Jesus. The service must recognize and reflect these contrasts.

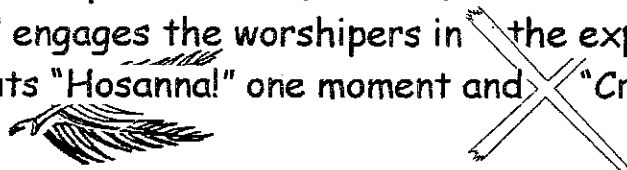


The service focuses on four areas: procession of the palms, celebration of the Word of God (Scripture), responses and offerings, and the sacrament of communion. This service, by its very nature, may be longer than usual if all elements are included. Combining Palm Sunday with reading the Passion narrative in its entirety has developed in more recent years.

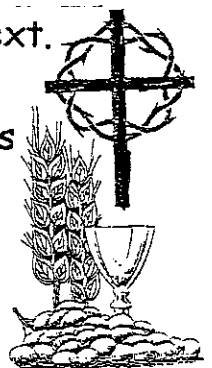


The question has been asked why the new lectionary and church year calendar shared by the historic Christian community have combined Palm Sunday and the Passion into one. There are at least two answers offered. One reason given is that the passion story is a highly dramatic and unified whole and thus should be experienced as a whole and not bits and pieces scattered over several days. However, the other reason is more the reality of the times. Most persons who attend Palm/Passion Sunday will not be back until Easter Sunday. To go from the lesser joy of the Triumphal Entry to the greater joy of the Resurrection without encountering the Passion (arrest, trial and crucifixion) is to miss the mark and central core of the Gospel story. Resurrection cannot occur without the death which precedes it.

In some congregations, a tradition of blessing the palms and then processing into the church has developed. This processional may stand in contrast to the silent processional, if used, which marked the Lenten season thus far and engages the worshipers in the experience of the crowd who shouts "Hosanna!" one moment and "Crucify!" the next.

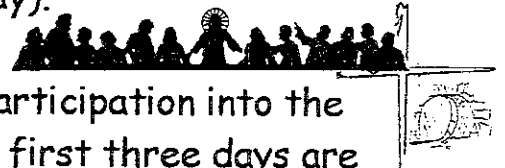


There are some worship leaders who still prefer to encourage persons to take advantage of the experience as it unfolds day to day. Palm Sunday will be followed by at least the experiences of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday with perhaps a Great Sabbath vigil to the First Service on Easter morn. Recognizing that the majority will probably be missing between sundays - touches of the events during the week may end and then begin the Sunday services on either end.



## Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

On Palm/Passion Sunday, the congregation gathered to remember the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the beginning of a week that would end in his tragic death. These days are the most intense days of the Christian year, culminating with the highest Holy Days - the Easter Triduum (sunset Thursday to sunset Sunday).



We now have entered the yearly renewal of our participation into the central mystery of Christian life and faith. These first three days are sometimes referred to as the minor days in Holy Week and really extend through Thursday afternoon. These days provide the opportunity to dwell upon Scripture, with particular attention to the final events, and to ponder their meaning for us in the context of prayer and meditation.

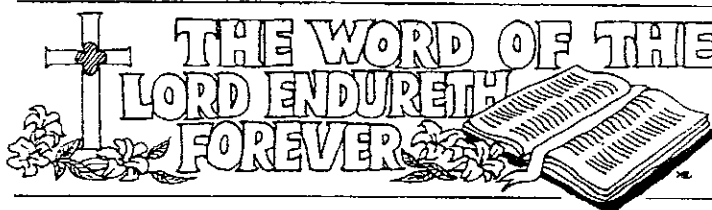


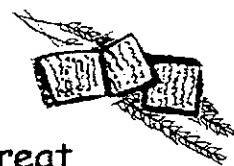
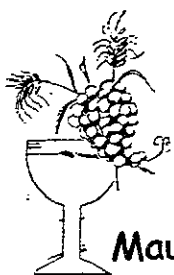
Often mid-day or evening services, sometimes ecumenically, are held on these days giving opportunity to gather for those who desire to do so. Families may also take advantage of setting aside time, in the home, to share the story and reflect upon its meaning.



The visual arts may add a great deal to these worship experiences to ease the amount of reading that can occur. Picking up images from the scripture references can enhance the worship space and provide meditative material for the worshiper.

Special attention during these final days of Lent should be given to fasting and almsgiving. If these Lenten disciplines have not been part of the Lenten experience thus far, perhaps engaging in a partial fast before the daily service or a "sacrificial meal" in which the money normally spent for the food would be given to a special need or mission project.

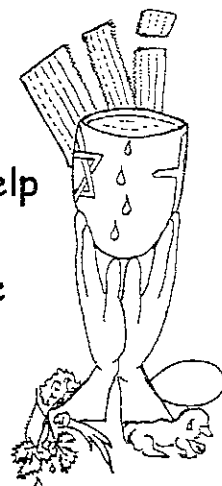




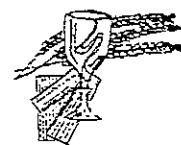
## Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday at sunset begins the Easter Triduum/The Great Three Days, the holiest days of the Christian Year. The word "Maundy" is thought to have come from the Latin word "mandatum novum" which means "a new commandment." Maundy would then refer to the instructions Jesus gave his disciples (according to John's Gospel) in the upper room on the night before the Passover - "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another." (John 13:34).

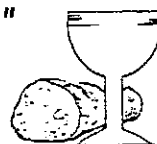
Maundy Thursday, also called Holy Thursday, is usually celebrated in churches by participating in the sacrament of Holy Communion (reflecting the Last Supper in the context of the Passover Seder as recorded in the synoptic Gospels - Matthew, Mark & Luke). In some churches the Seder meal (Jewish Passover observance) is used to help persons put the Last Supper in its original context. However, care should be taken, if participating in a Seder, that the integrity of the Jewish observance not be compromised. Some Rabbis in the Reform Jewish community will be glad to share with congregations a Model Seder to set the context.



Jesus, as a Jewish Rabbi led his Jewish disciples in a Jewish observance. He offered a new interpretation to the many layers of meaning which already existed. The Church which grew out of the followers of Jesus defined the sacramental nature of the event and developed the interpretation and meaning attached to the observance.



In that final meal, Jesus shared with his disciples, is revealed the holiness of all subsequent meals eaten in Christ's name. It institutes the mystery of his abiding redemptive presence experienced in the celebration of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist/ Holy Communion. "Do this, as often as you eat/drink, in remembrance of me."



In the early centuries and still today, the symbolic washing of feet (recorded in the Gospel of John) has been included in some celebrations of Maundy Thursday.



Historically, Maundy Thursday includes some distinctive elements. They are (1) introductory liturgy with a focus on penitence; (2) the Word of God (Scripture); (3) foot washing; (4) Holy Communion/agape or love feast; (5) stripping of the church; and (6) Tenebrae/Service of Shadows. The last two elements are included here particularly when there is not a separate Good Friday service. If all elements are included in the service, it will more than likely be close to two hours in length.

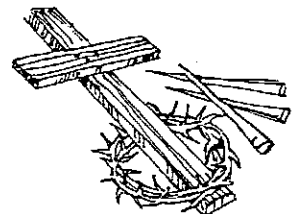
Depending upon the community, location and customs, this service may be intimate and casual or highly liturgical. The service may take place around tables in the fellowship hall or in the sanctuary. The sacrament might be administered in a variety of ways. The whole service, whatever the setting should be seen as evangelical in the most profound sense - proclamation, encounter, and participation in the mystery of our redemption in this Passover experience through the saving act of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ



## Good Friday



The question often asked, "Why good?" makes us think about this day. The word "good" may refer to what God was able to do for people in bringing to life the Christ. From what people did (crucifixion) it truly was "bad" Friday, but from what God did (resurrection) it can be seen as "good." Another suggestion about the origin of "good" is that it represents a change from an older phrase of "God's Friday." Many suggest that "good" and "god" once came from the same word.



Good Friday is the most traditional fast day for the Christian. During the first three centuries, the custom was to precede the paschal celebration with a two-day fast. Sometimes a modified fast took place over six days. The practices of fasting and almsgiving go well back into biblical times and were taught by Jesus. They were also widespread disciplines in the apostolic church. The FAST of Lent contrasts in its restraint the heightened awareness of sinfulness with the FEAST of Easter which celebrates the abundance of God's goodness we are empowered to share.

Liturgical renewal has brought with it recovery of the connections between fasting, almsgiving and prayer. One of the most meaningful ways comes through the prayer vigils on Friday and Saturday of Holy Week. The fast is broken with the Vigil or First Service held on Easter morning. It can be particularly powerful for those who have been preparing for baptism and membership during the Lenten season.

Good Friday worship is dramatic and powerful. Some form of presentation of the Passion narratives found in the four Gospels is the core of the service. Whether done in combination with Maundy Thursday or separately on Good Friday, one way of experiencing the desolation and abandonment beginning with the long night in the garden of Gethsemane through the burial in the tomb, is the "stripping of the church." All paraments, candles, textile hangings, etc. are removed from the sanctuary.

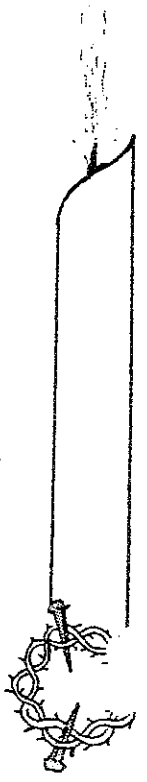
This practice of "stripping" dates from the seventh century. It originally was done for the practical purpose of cleaning the church in preparation for Easter. But in the process, the stark, bare church so reflected the tone of the occasion that it became a powerful tradition for celebrating this event.





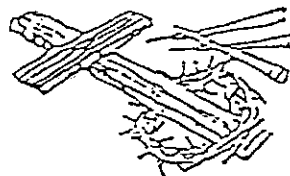
The items to be removed are pick up by designated persons and silently carried out of the Sanctuary. The process is reversed as part of Easter Eve or Easter morning services as part of the proclamation "Christ is risen!"

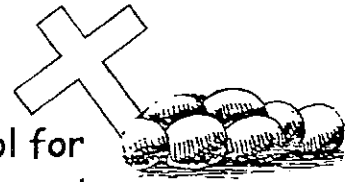
Another way to mark the Passion experience is the service of Tenebrae or "shadows." It developed as a combination of night prayer and early morning prayer centered upon the passion. With the reading of the Passion narrative, the gradual extinguishing of lights and candles in the room and on the altar occurs. If "stripping" occurred on Maundy Thursday, the starkness of the room heightens the awareness of the moments. The candles represent the disciples then, and all followers of Jesus since, who deny, betray and desert in various ways. A larger, central candle represents the Christ. The most dramatic point comes when there is total darkness and a loud noise declares the death of Jesus. After a time of silence, a solo voice, unaccompanied might pierce the darkness with verses of "Were You There?" or other appropriate Hymn to fit the service. All are asked to leave in silence.



Journeying through the events of the passion - traditional stations of the cross or a modified rendering of these events is another way to involve the worshiper in the Maundy Thursday/Good Friday experience. Worship centers may be designed and placed throughout the church using colors and symbols to visually tell the story, and including candles to be extinguished.

Then the worshipers are able to take a journey from the upper room to the tomb, stopping at each station to hear the story and extinguish the light. Some of the many symbols which can be used for these settings include bag of coins, rooster, whip, ladder, dice, crown of thorns, nails, cross, bowl of water, etc.





Stones or crosses may be given to each worshiper as a symbol for reflection which may be brought with them on Easter morning to be exchanged for a resurrection symbol. Sometimes persons are given the opportunity to write on slips of paper ways they have crucified Jesus in their lives and then during the service, nail these papers to the cross. Personal involvement in the story is important.

Writing the Gospel texts in play form and using several persons to participate reader's theater style (just read text as play with not staging), is also an effective way in which the passion story has been presented. Careful preparation by the readers is essential. Several forms of dramatic reading scripts are available.



### **The Great Sabbath/Holy Saturday**

While not celebrated in significant and tangible ways in most churches, this day is one of waiting, as the women waited on the Sabbath before going to the tomb to care for the body of Jesus.

Traditionally this day is one of fasting and prayer. Historically, Good Friday through Saturday was the final period of intensive preparation for persons to be baptized and entered into (or restored to) the church community on Easter.



### **The Great Paschal (Easter) Vigil**

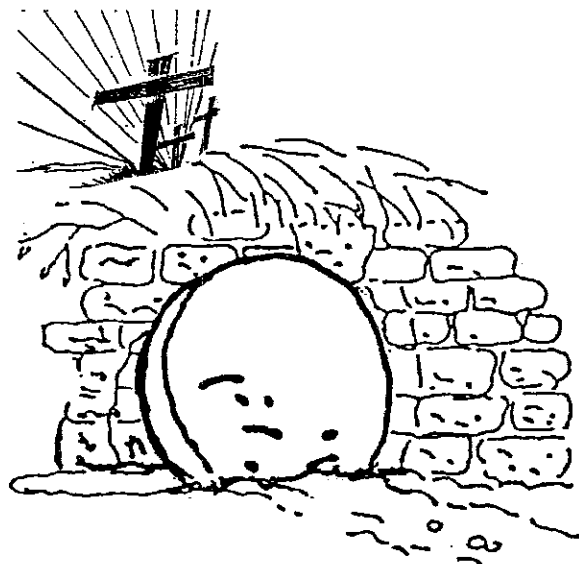
We now come to the holiest night of the entire Christian Year. During the Easter Triduum (sunset Thursday to sunset Sunday), the church celebrates the events of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. As the worship of the church developed, each event came to be encountered and remembered on a separate day.

However, in the earliest centuries, the whole of the Paschal Mystery was celebrated in one single liturgy which began on Saturday evening and continued through the dawn of what is now called Easter Day. It was known as the great Paschal (Easter) Vigil. It was the most holy and joyful experience of the Christian Year, for its message was the proclamation and celebration of the whole salvation history of God and the saving work of Jesus the Christ.

In this event, the fullness of Christian sacraments are joined with the Word of God. The Christian initiatory rite (baptism) implants in us the seed of resurrection. It provides not only initiation but also renewal. The gift of new life for all members of the community is experienced.

The Easter Vigil has both historic and symbolic roots in Pesach (Jewish Passover). We experience, in this event, the passing over from slavery to freedom, from death to life, from sin to salvation. The vigil of the Christian Passover marks the beginning of the highest holy day of the Christian year, the Sunday of all Sundays.

This concludes the Season of Lent as the great Paschal Vigil approaches the dawn of Easter Day and the Great Fifty Days which follow.

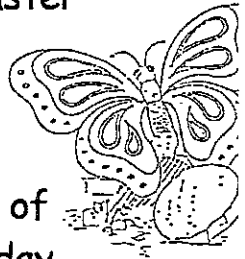




## THE SEASON OF EASTER

### Easter Day

Easter Day begins a joyous fifty days of celebration as we encounter the appearances of the risen Christ to his followers in a variety of ways. Easter Day recounts the stories from the Gospel tradition of the visit to the tomb on the first day of the week. Each Gospel tells the story with its own uniqueness and its own cast of characters. The liturgical colors appropriate to the day are white and gold. The use of lilies and butterflies carry their own traditional meanings to the Easter message. Worshipers celebrate with new clothes and flowers and family gatherings for worship and festive meals.

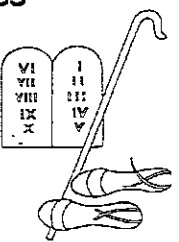


The empty cross draped in white with very often a Chrismon crown of white and gold beads, replacing the crown of thorns from Good Friday, is another visual to accent the day. The use of brass to accompany choirs and congregational singing adds to the joyous nature of worship.



### The Great Fifty Days

Easter Day to the Day of Pentecost (fiftieth day after Easter) matches in time and, in some ways, focus with the Jewish festivals of Pesah to Shavuot (Passover to Pentecost). The Hebrew story of salvation centers in the Exodus from Egypt (Pesah/Passover) climaxing with the giving of the Torah (the Law/the Word of God) at Sinai marked by the festival of Shavuot (Pentecost). The Christian story of salvation centers in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus (the passover lamb) celebrated on Easter and climaxing in the coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost).





During the first forty days between Easter and Pentecost, the stories of the appearances of the risen Christ are remembered and celebrated. These forty days of appearances culminate into the Ascension of Jesus in anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus as the one who would come (Advocate, Counselor, Spirit of Truth) when he returned to God. The color for these Sundays of Easter continues to be white.

Ten days later, on the fiftieth day, we celebrate the Day of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the "birthday" of the Church. (Until at least the end of the fourth century, the Ascending of Christ and the descending of the Holy Spirit were celebrated on the same day, the Day of Pentecost.) Then the two events were celebrated a week apart to provide the opportunity to more fully experience the uniqueness of each event in the life of the Christ and the Church.

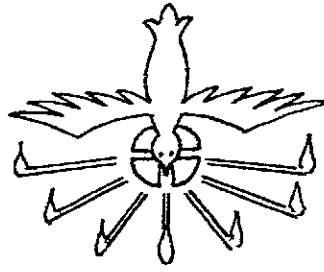
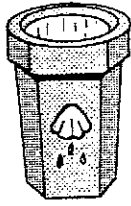
Baptism and the renewal of Baptism are very often celebrated during this fifty day period and especially on Easter Day and the Day of Pentecost.



### **The Ascension**

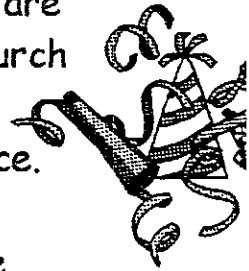
The Ascension of Christ is celebrated on the Sunday closest to the fortieth day after Easter and one week before Pentecost. In some Christian Traditions like the Eastern Orthodox, the celebrations occur on the actual day even if mid-week. The color is white and the story as told by Luke both at the end of the *Gospel according to Luke* and the beginning of *The Acts of the Apostles*.





## THE DAY OF PENTECOST

The Day of Pentecost is celebrated on the fiftieth day after Easter Day and marks the coming of the Holy Spirit as recorded in **The Acts of the Apostles**. The color is red and is often marked with candles in various shades, shapes and sizes to accent the reds, oranges and yellows of fire. Banners and streamers of these colors may be used in processional "parades". The cross used in Lent draped in the various colors of the season can be used again - now draped in red or a fabric of mottled flame-like colors. Worshipers may be invited to wear these "flame-like" colors to worship. Often Baptisms and Confirmations are part of the worship celebration. This "Birthday Party" for the church can again utilize many musical and artistic techniques to bring the feeling of the Holy Spirit's presence alive in the worship experience.



Instruments, sacred dance, dramatic readings are but some of the liturgical arts which can be explored and incorporated into this festive experience.

