

LENT AND EASTER IN PHASES

WHAT IS LENT ALL ABOUT?

Our Church liturgical seasons of Lent and Easter are given by our Father with perfect timing in our lives. The winter months are a test bringing us often to our limits of health and endurance – a perfect time for us to readjust ourselves to God’s time and rhythm of life. We don’t notice it but life has a way of speeding us up as we run after so many good things that we tend to forget what it’s all about and why we are making all these efforts in the first place. God gives us pertinent Scripture texts, prayers and hymns to again adjust our inner movement and rhythm to Jesus' life and preaching, miracles and signs, to the great love of God He made visible in His passion, death and resurrection, His ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

ASH WEDNESDAY

As we receive ashes, we remember our mortality and the value of God’s gift of life, admit selfishness, confess our sins, do penance to repent and change our lives, and give God more room through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

40 DAYS OF LENT

Jesus invites us to join Him and let the Holy Spirit lead us into the desert: for 40 days we turn away from satisfying our senses’ insatiable cravings to free our heart to attend to God and our neighbour, beginning with our family. The desert is for letting our spirit be still and silent, so it can be awake again and find the Holy Spirit guiding us to find and do the Father's Will like Jesus. These 40 days can bring us new peace with God, our family, and the world; as 40 days of rain washed away evil in Noah’s day as he did God’s will. Lent connects us to the 12 tribes of Israel who wandered in the desert for 40 years until they were purified of their rebellious attitudes and became willing to enter the Promised Land and live as God offered them by His instructions.

HOLY WEEK

The 7 days of the week are a perennial echo of the 7 days of Creation when God brought the universe, the earth, all creatures and humanity into being, declared them good, and rested. Humans need to imitate God and rest one day a week to avoid being enslaved by work and remain free to enjoy life, to let love radiate within our family, and to adore God. In Lent we can respond to God, turning away from sin and frantic busyness, paying closer attention to God's Word, and praying more fervently. Holy Week looks back to the 7 days of Creation and gives us a renewed personal experience of God's action in Jesus effectively redeeming humanity and making all creation new.

WHAT IS EASTER ALL ABOUT?

40 DAYS OF EASTER

Through His selfless sacrifice, Jesus drew the Father's mercy and forgiveness on all of humanity and each one of us personally. While humanity continues to participate in the sinfulness of the original disobedience and rebellion, and suffers the burden and curse of unsatisfying, tiring or meaningless labor; all are invited to repent of their sin, live the freeing obedience of Jesus, walk in the peace and love of God's children, and enter into hope and rest in the Holy Spirit. Easter's 40 days of joy in Jesus' Resurrection is God's answer to the 40 days and years in the desert, and Sunday is the new Day of the Lord for Jesus' disciples for the rest of our lives – until we enter fully into God's rest.

10 DAYS UNTIL PENTECOST

The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven marks the end of the 40 days of Easter joy when we celebrate Jesus' Presence and enjoy His Love and the radiance of His victory over death. This victory, complete in His human flesh, is not yet fully won in us. Jesus calls us to pray together just as the Apostles and the other disciples did for 10 days – as long as we need to pray – for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes and dispels doubts and fears with power like wind and fire: illuminating the mind, purifying the heart, inflaming the soul, and strengthening the flesh. The illumined mind sees as true the mysteries of God; the purified heart – free from all other attachments – clings to God as the one thing necessary; the inflamed soul loves God as the One who alone is worthy of all its affections; the strengthened flesh overcomes all obstacles and fears and gives a personal and whole-hearted response to the Lord's call: "Come, follow Me!"

ORDINARY TIME UNTIL CHRIST THE KING

The weeks from Pentecost to the end of November and the Solemnity of Christ the King are Ordinary Time, and they represent our life of faith, our labors of love, and our joyful anticipation in hope; as we await the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds, the second and glorious coming of Christ our King and Lord of the Universe. On that day He will come as Judge of the Nations, having lavished the riches of His merciful Love on all who accept His gifts of grace and return his love by loving others as He loves them.

JESUS CHRIST FULFILLS HIS PROMISES

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus promised to remain with us every day until the end. We experience Jesus fulfilling his promise at the Sunday Eucharist and other Liturgical Celebrations where the People of God are gathered around Jesus by the Holy Spirit. His real Presence and life-giving Love raise the poor and afflicted to new life and strengthen us to live fully to the end and faithfully to the Father's will as Jesus did. All is grace, to the glory of God the Father.