

## CELEBRATING LENT AND EASTER

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Easter is the high point of the Christian year, a time of joyous celebration. Lent, the season of 40 days leading up to Easter, is more sombre, a time for reflection and learning.

### THE MEANING OF THE DAYS

#### Lent

- is a season of the church year that begins with Ash Wednesday
- comes from "lencten," an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning "spring" (when the days "lengthen")
- uses the liturgical colour violet or purple signifying humility and penitence
- consists of 40 days plus six Sundays before Easter (Sundays are "in" but not "of" Lent since Sunday is always the day of resurrection)
- symbolizes the 40 days of Jesus' temptation and preparation for ministry

#### Ash Wednesday

- is the beginning of Lent
- is named from some churches that use ashes to make the sign of a cross on the forehead of a Christian to symbolize repentance and grieving
- is preceded by Shrove Tuesday when Christians have traditionally prepared pancakes; this is an old tradition when Christians gave up meat for Lent and used the last of the animal fat to make pancakes. ("Shrove" means to hear confession of sins and pronounce forgiveness.)

#### Palm Sunday

- celebrates the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem
- the palm tree in the Bible symbolizes honour or eternal life

#### Maundy Thursday

- comes from the Latin word "mandatum" meaning commandment
- refers to the "new commandment" Jesus gave his disciples in the upper room on the Thursday before Passover
- is often called Holy Thursday
- is usually celebrated in churches with communion or the Seder (Passover meal)
- may be associated with feet washing, the Gospel for the day

#### Good Friday

- a day of solemn reflection on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ
- refers to the great good that God accomplished for humanity

#### Easter

- expressed by the proclamation, "Christ is Risen!"
- falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the spring equinox
- uses the liturgical colour white, which symbolizes purity and holiness
- Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ every Sunday but especially on Easter Day