

Some Scriptures for meditation:

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12; Psalm 119:9-16; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33.

Palm Sunday: (Palms Liturgy)—March 24, 2024

Two potential directions for Palm Sunday are offered here: The Palms Liturgy and the Passion Liturgy. The journey of Lent has almost come to a close. The crowd that hailed Jesus as king on Sunday is likely also, in part, the crowd that mocked and scorned Him on Friday. God’s way is becoming clear: It leads through joyful shouts and festal processions, but ends at a place of loneliness and death.

Some Scriptures for meditation:

Mark 11:1-11; John 12:12-16; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29.

Palm Sunday (Passion Liturgy)—March 24, 2024

Some Scriptures for meditation: Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 31:9-16, Philip-
pians 2:5-11, Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39, (40-47).

Image credits (in order of appearance):

Front Cover: This simple form of the cross is known as the Jerusalem or “Crusaders” Cross, because it was on the papal banner given to the first crusaders and became a symbol of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The crosses are said to symbolize either the four books of the Gospel, the four directions in which the word of Christ spread from Jerusalem, or (taken altogether) the five wounds of Christ (crown, scourging, plucking of the beard, nails, and pierced side). The cross was worn by pilgrims going to Jerusalem for Holy Week observances.

God the Father Establishing His Covenant with Noah, 1567, (reproduction of the original). Willem de Pannemaker (p.4).

Look Toward the Heavens. Oil on canvas, 2005. He Qi (p.5).

Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law. Oil on canvas, c. 1960. Marc Chagall (p.5).

Moses and the Brass Serpent. Oil on canvas, date unknown. Arthur Sussman (p.6).

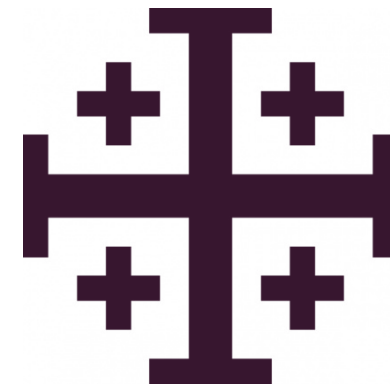
Christ as High Priest. Traditional icon (p.6).



Epiclesis

An Ancient-Future Faith Community...

The Covenant



and the Cross

About Lent...

When people think of Lent, they often think of Roman Catholic observances. But Lent is not a Catholic thing or an Episcopal thing— *it's a Christian thing!* Lent has been observed in one form or another since the very early Christian church, long before there were Catholics or Episcopalians. What's more, growing numbers of historically non-liturgical churches are finding new meaning in the keeping of Lent. They are discovering that the journey of Lent helps prepare them for the great celebration of Easter and is a welcome spiritual enrichment.

Scholars are not entirely sure about the origins of the word "Lent" (it may be an Old English term meaning "spring"), but they do know that since the earliest days of the church, believers have observed a time of preparation in the weeks leading up to Resurrection morning. This time came to be known as Lent. *And here's an interesting fact:* Preparation for entry into the church would have taken two or three years, a lengthy process, with particular emphasis on the weeks leading up to Easter. On Easter morning, Christians who had completed the process would be baptized and receive their first communion.

Increasingly, Lent is seen more as a time of "taking things on," rather than "giving things up." Lent is a journey, an invitation to walk in Christ's own footsteps, to take on His likeness, and to follow Him even to the foot of the cross— and it's a time to focus on the awareness of the need for repentance. To do so links us with countless believers across the ages— a long line of Christian brothers and sisters— who saw this time as an opportunity for both discipleship and paying attention to the needs of others.



Via Dolorosa, Jerusalem



Fourth Sunday in Lent: Snakes in the Desert—March 10, 2024

Broad theme: *The people's experience in the desert prefigures the salvation available through Christ.*

The story in Numbers of the poisonous serpents in the camp of the Children of Israel is a strange one. The people grumbled against God and so He sent snakes into the camp to bite them. Many were killed. Yet He also provided a way for them to be saved: The raising up of a bronze serpent on a pole. When the people looked up at the snake, they were saved.

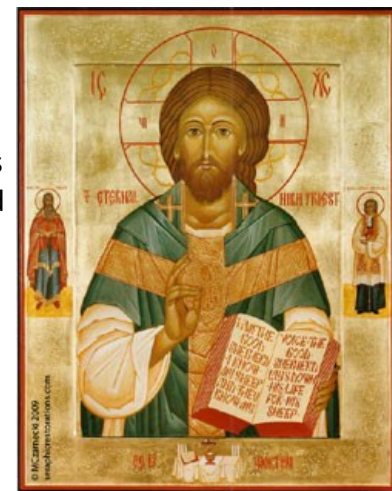
Some Scriptures for meditation:

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Eph 2:1-10; John 3:14-21.

Fifth Sunday in Lent: High Priest— March 17, 2024

Broad theme: *Jesus Christ is the perfect, new covenant.*

The Book of Hebrews is the best place in the New Testament to find an explanation of how and why Christ Jesus is the new covenant. It also explains (especially in Chapter 8) why God found fault with the old covenant and talks about the distinguishing features of the new. One of those distinguishing features is that God's law will be written on the peoples' hearts. Two other of the scriptural passages for today emphasize the purity of the heart.



Second Sunday in Lent: God's Covenant with Abram—Feb 25, 2024

Broad theme: *The covenant God made with Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham, is made available to all through Christ.*

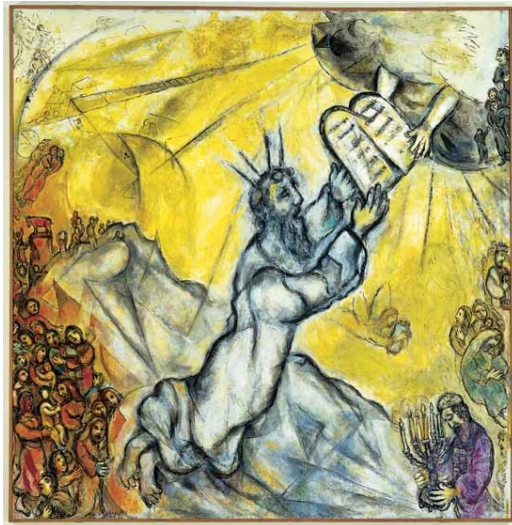


Today's Scripture readings tie together God's promise to Abraham with the suffering of Christ. Take some time to read the account of God's covenant with Abram (in the Genesis passage) then follow it up with Paul's message to the Romans about the law (where he talks about the promise made to Abraham).

Some Scriptures for meditation:

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Rom 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38.

Third Sunday in Lent: Covenant and the Law—March 3, 2024



Broad theme: *The Law that God established for His children is fulfilled in Christ.*

The Ten Commandments were given by God to His people, to paraphrase Paul, to "outline the boundaries"—a kind of fence, as it were, to show people the dividing line between obedience and sin. Jesus Christ came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

Look at these Scriptures for meditation to prepare for Sunday's worship gathering. What do you make of the scene in John's Gospel, Jesus clearing the Temple, in light of our discussion about covenants?:

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 2 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22.

The season of Lent, a period of forty days, follows Epiphany. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and culminating in Holy week, this season of both sorrow and joy is a time for the church to proclaim, remember, and respond to the atoning death of Christ. The traditional violet/purple color usually associated with the season is meant to convey the reflective, penitential tones of Lent.

Some questions and answers about Lent...



What is the Lenten season, and why is it set apart? It's a period of six weeks preceding the anniversary of the Savior's death, and is set apart as a special season of fasting, repentance, and prayer.

With what event in Jesus' life does the Lenten season correspond? Because Christ was in the wilderness 40 days, the early church chose that as an appropriate time for preparation for baptism which often happened at Easter. Thus the season of Lent gradually evolved into the penitential season we now know.

Why is the first day of Lent called "Ash Wednesday"? Because of the custom in the early church of sprinkling ashes on the heads of worshipers the first day of Lent to show sorrow for sin.

Are there any examples of this custom with ashes mentioned in the Bible? Yes, many. Some examples are Daniel and David and the people of Nineveh, to which Jesus Himself refers in Matthew 11:21.

If Lent only lasts 40 days, why does it begin 46 days before Easter? There are six Sundays in Lent, and since all Sundays are considered "feast days" in honor of the Resurrection, they are taken out. To make up for them, six days are added to the season.

What is the object of keeping Lent? To deepen the religious life, to purify the heart from sin, and to unite us more closely with the Savior.

Why do some churches suggest that fasting be observed? Because repentance and humility are essential to spiritual growth. In the Bible, fasting is often coupled with repentance and seeking after God.

Some ways to observe Lent...

Searching the Scriptures

Lent is the perfect time for common Bible study, as well as an opportunity to renew personal reading. One good place to start is to read in preparation for our Sunday worship services during Lent. You'll find a listing of each Sunday in Lent, together with its scriptural theme, here in this booklet.



Prayer and Fasting

Over the years, prayer and fasting have been the most visible aspects of Lent. More frequent and intense personal prayer time is something that most Christians could use. Perhaps Lent could be a time for you to make good on some well-meaning resolutions to spend more time in prayer.



Many people find it helpful for personal discipline to have a season intentionally dedicated to “simplify” the way they live. For example, Lent can be a meaningful time for learning how to eat in less indulgent ways. But merely “giving up” food for physical self improvement is not the point. Rather, we want to learn about the connections between living more simply to unclutter our lives and showing solidarity with those who have less.

Acts of Love and Devotion

Historically, the season of Lent has been a time to focus on the needs of others, especially the poor and needy. Acts of love and devotion, also called acts of piety, have been overlooked by many in their Lenten observances. Of course, acts of love and devotion are not for show but rather for God's glory and for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ.



The Covenant and the Cross

Sundays in Lent, 2024

During our Lenten journey this year, we're going to ponder God's covenants and how they are fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus. Covenants are found throughout Scripture— in fact, once you recognize covenant language, it's hard to read very far in God's word without coming across a covenant. This Lent, let's dive into some of the covenants God made and discover how they come together at the foot of the cross.

First Sunday in Lent: God's Covenant with Noah—Feb 18, 2024

Broad theme: *The series begins with a look at one of the most familiar and dramatic of the Old Testament covenants: The covenant God made with humankind through Noah and his descendants.*



When we think of Noah, our minds probably go straight away to the building of the ark. But let's not forget the covenant that God made with Noah after the water receded and the boat landed on dry ground.

Think on these Scriptures as you prepare for Sunday. Take a look at how Peter harkens back to the days of Noah to bring covenant and the cross together for his readers:

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15.