



“Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart.”


Joel 2:12



This chapter offers preparation for
the season of Lent.

Lent is a season of preparation for the great celebration of Easter.

WE GATHER

 *Holy Spirit, help us to follow Christ.*

What are some ways to become a better student, team player, or class member? Why is it important to try to improve?

WE BELIEVE

During Lent the whole Church prepares for the great celebration of Christ's Paschal Mystery in the Easter Triduum. This season is the final time of preparation for those who will celebrate the Sacraments of Christian Initiation at Easter. It is also a time for all who are already baptized in the Church to prepare to renew their Baptism at Easter. The whole Church thinks and prays about the new life Christ shares with us in Baptism.

Penance Lent is a time of conversion, of turning to God with all our hearts. God constantly calls us to be with him and to respond to his love. Lent is a special time to think about the ways we follow God's law. It is a time to change our lives so that we can be better disciples of Christ.

Penance is an important part of this conversion. Doing penance helps us to turn back to God and to focus on the things that are important in our lives as Christians. Doing penance is a way to show that we are sorry for our sins. Our penance restores or strengthens our friendship with God and the Church.


We may do penance by giving up things we enjoy, like a favorite food or activity. We can also do without, or fast, from these things. Catholics of certain ages do penance by fasting from food on Ash Wednesday and not eating meat on the Fridays during Lent.

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts forty days. On Ash Wednesday we are marked on our foreheads with blessed ashes. These ashes are a sign of sorrow for our sins and of hope of having life forever with God. During Lent we use deep shades of purple and violet in our churches and during our worship. This is a sign of our need for reconciliation with God. The color also helps us to remember that joy and happiness will come from Christ's Death and Resurrection.

Lent is a season of simple living. We make a special effort to pray, to do penance, and to do good works. We are called to do these things all year long. During Lent, however, they take on added meaning as we prepare to renew our Baptism.

Prayer During Lent we try to give more time to God, and prayer helps us to do this. In Lent we may devote extra time to daily prayers and worship. We can spend more time reading and reflecting on Scripture. We can pray especially for those who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. We can gather with our parishes for the Stations of the Cross (found on page 327) and for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.

Good works During Lent we also show special concern for those in need. A way to do penance is to practice a work of mercy or to give of our time in a special way. We follow Jesus' example of providing for the hungry and caring for the sick. We try to help other people get the things they need and to make sure that people have what is rightfully theirs. Many parishes have food and clothing drives during this time of year. Families may volunteer at soup kitchens, visit those who are sick, and practice other works of mercy. We remember that good works should happen all year long.


 In what ways can you grow closer to Christ and others this Lent?

I will pray by _____

I will turn to God by _____

I will care for the needs of others by _____

Passion (Palm) Sunday After five weeks of preparing through prayer, penance, and doing good works, Lent is nearly over. The Sunday before the Easter Triduum is known as Passion Sunday. This Sunday is also called Palm Sunday. We recall Jesus' Passion: the judgment to put him to Death, his carrying of the cross, and his suffering and dying on the cross. We also celebrate his joyous entrance into Jerusalem just days before he was to die.

 **Matthew 21:1-11**

Jesus and his disciples were traveling to Jerusalem for the great feast of Passover. As they neared the city, Jesus sent two disciples ahead to find a mule on which he could ride. They did as Jesus ordered. When they returned they placed their cloaks upon the animal, and Jesus sat upon it.

"The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying:

'Hosanna to the Son of David;
blessed is he who comes in the
name of the Lord;
hosanna in the highest.'

And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken and asked, 'Who is this?' And the crowds replied, 'This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee.'" (Matthew 21:8-11)



The original Hebrew meaning of the word *hosanna* is "O Lord, grant salvation." But it had come to be an acclamation of joy and welcome. The crowds were overjoyed to see Jesus.

On Passion Sunday, a joyful procession takes place to celebrate Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. We may gather away from the church building, and palm branches are blessed with holy water. We listen to the story of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, and a short homily may be given. The procession then begins to the church. We all sing hosanna and wave our branches to praise and welcome Jesus as the crowds of Jerusalem once did.

When we arrive at the church, Mass begins. During the Liturgy of the Word the Gospel reading is the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the longest Gospel readings we hear all year long. It helps to prepare us for the celebration of the Easter Triduum that will begin four days later on Holy Thursday evening.

The palm branches that are blessed on Passion Sunday remind us that Lent is a time of renewal and hope. After Mass many people place these branches near the cross or crucifix in their home. The palm branches often remain there until the celebration of Passion Sunday the following year. These branches are also burned before Lent of the next year to make ashes for the Ash Wednesday celebration.

WE RESPOND

In your family or parish are there any other traditions or practices regarding the palm branches?

What are some other signs of new life and hope that help people to follow Christ?



Passion Sunday

We Respond in Prayer

Leader: The Lord calls us to days of penance
and mercy. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All: Now and for ever.

Reader: A reading from the Book of Joel
“Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;
Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the LORD, your God.
For gracious and merciful is he,
slow to anger, rich in kindness.” (Joel 2:12-13)
The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sign Us with Ashes

Refrain

Sign us with ashes, the sign of your cross.
Give us the grace to know your mercy, Lord.
Renew our spirits and open our hearts.
Help us remember the love you gave us.

Help us pray so we might be closer
to you and to God's family. (Refrain)

Help us fast so we might know the want
of those within God's family. (Refrain)

Help us give so we might share of what
we have to serve God's family. (Refrain)