

Understanding The Lenten Season

[Starting on ~~ASH~~ Wednesday \(26 Feb 2020\)](#)



We are in the season of Lent, which commenced on ~~ASH~~ Wednesday (26th Feb 2020).

The liturgical colour for Lent is **purple**, which symbolizes honour, repentance and self-sacrifice. At the start of Lent (~~ASH~~ Wednesday), the ~~ASH~~ (traditionally applied to the forehead in the shape of a cross) symbolizes grief over our sins. We believe in the Gospel and repent (Mk 1:15), recognizing the fragility and shortness of human life. (*Gen 3:19b – “for dust you are and to dust you will return.”*)

[Holy Week](#)

The Holy Week starts on Palm Sunday (5th Apr 2020); i.e., the Sunday before Easter (12th Apr 2020). It is also the last week of Lent.



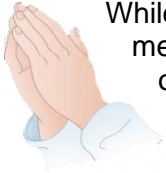
Maundy Thursday (9th Apr 2020) and Good Friday (10th Apr 2020) are within this Holy Week.

Counting from Ash Wednesday (excluding Sundays), the 40 days of Lent end on the Saturday (11th Apr 2020) before Easter (12th Apr 2020).

[Lent is not a joyful \(celebration\) time](#)

Lent is not a joyful (celebration) time. It is aptly called the Passion season because the work and sufferings of Christ is the key theme of

the season. This is reflected in our weekly sermons and lectionary readings. According to the Gospels, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to fast in the wilderness for 40 days and nights before beginning his public ministry. Hence, there is a church tradition of exhorting fasting exercises in the 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays) with reference to the 40 days and nights in which Jesus fasted and prayed.



While the Lenten season is not a joyful time, it is also not meant for us to put on a sad face. Rather, it is for us to take on a solemn spiritual disposition to imbibe lessons on humility and obedience, sanctifying our faith life as we contemplate the hope and joy when the misery of the Passion ends with the triumph of our Saviour over death through His Crucifixion and Resurrection as prophesied in the Scripture.

[Palm Sunday](#)



We commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, as recorded in all the canonical Gospels (Mt 21:1-11, Mk 11:1-11, Lk 19:28-44, Jn 12:2-19). We also meditate on how, notwithstanding the warm cheers and welcome with palm fronds, He saw evil lurking among the

Jewish leaders; and people who disbelieved that He was the Messiah wanted to have Him killed. It was to be His last visit to the Holy City and a short week before He would be betrayed by one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot.

[Maundy Thursday](#)

We commemorate The Last Supper – on “the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.” (Lk 22:7)



This is Maundy Thursday, when Jesus instituted the Holy Communion for us to partake of His body and blood regularly in remembrance of

Him. “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Cor 11:26)

It is deeply significant that our Lord spoke of the bread as “my body” and of the wine as “my blood”.

The fact that “the day of the Unleavened Bread” (i.e., the day of the Jewish Passover celebration) was chosen by Jesus as the Day of His Last Supper made the link between the old covenant and the new covenant:

- a) Under the old covenant – the past mercy of God in separating the Jews out for salvation involving the flesh-and-blood sacrifice of an unblemished lamb whereby they were **passed over** by God when His judgment came upon Egypt. (Ex 12)
- b) Under the new covenant – the present anticipation of salvation with Jesus being sacrificed as our unblemished Passover Lamb whereby we who believe and thus become reckoned as deserving of God’s mercy would be separated out and **passed over** from death into eternal life.

The Passover sacrifice in the exodus from Egypt was liberating for the Jews by the old covenant; while “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7) is liberating for God’s people by the new covenant in His blood. (Lk 22:20)

[Foot-washing on Maundy Thursday](#)
[\(It is seriously more than about humility\)](#)



It is not surprising that the foot-washing by Jesus (John 13) is often well-noticed as an act that our Lord used to teach His disciples on servanthood. This understanding has a strong basis in John 13:14-17, foot-washing being a common expression of humble hospitality in those days. However, the symbolism is more than about humble service.

When Peter opposed Jesus' attempt to wash his feet, the Lord responded tersely, ***“Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”*** (John 13:8b)

Certainly, to have or not to have a part with Jesus is not simply a matter of showing humble service. Can a disciple be “One with Christ” if he has no part with Jesus? It was not good enough for disciples to be humble servants to serve (wash the feet of) other Christians but not willing to be served (washed). Consider the following analogies of dubious humility:

- A Christian is humble in serving other Christians but is reluctant to accept humble service from others.
- A disciple of Christ goes about spiritually cleansing others of their filth (sins) but is not inclined to first receive cleansing from the Lord because ... “Oh my Lord, I don't wish to impose on you.” 🤔

The message of foot-washing goes beyond the ethical or courtesy imperative of rendering humble service as disciples of Christ, but also carries a salvific symbolism of being a part with Jesus. In other words, our acts of servanthood must have its source of grace in Jesus Christ.

[Good Friday](#)

What happened on Good Friday?

- ✝️ In the morning Jesus was subjected to a sham trial on fake charges.
- ✝️ He was then sentenced to die on the Cross.
- ✝️ At noon, darkness came upon the whole land until three in the afternoon. (Mk 15:33)
- ✝️ His body was pierced by soldiers with a spear (John 19:34)



- ✠ That evening, He was laid in the tomb by a disciple of His, with a big stone rolled in front of the entrance. (Mk 15:42-47)

Was that the end of Jesus?

If so, then the Friday would not be called “Good” (or “Holy”).

Indeed, it was not the end of Jesus’ story. He did not die in vain. He is God’s Son, and He died for our sins. *“He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.”* – 1 Thess 5:10

[Thereafter](#)

After Good (Holy) Friday, the Easter story beckons to be told.

Our reflective spirit in Lent leads us to Eastertide when great rejoicing will break forth, because: **HE WAS RESURRECTED ON THE THIRD DAY!** (1 Cor 15:4)

John Lee