



# KEEPING A HOLY LENT

INTRODUCTION AND A BRIEF HISTORY



## OPENING PRAYER – COLLECT FOR FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

## WARM-UP CONVERSATION

- What are you doing for Lent and why?
- Have you done it before?
- How is it going?
  
- What are you hoping to get out of this series?

## INVITATION TO A HOLY LENT – *BCP, P. 264*

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

## INVITATION TO A HOLY LENT – *BCP, P. 264*

- Ancient practice for Christians
- Tied to the passion and resurrection of Jesus
- Season of penitence and fasting
- Preparation for Baptism
- Penance, Reconciliation, Restoration, and Renewal
- Practices:
  - Self-examination and repentance
  - Prayer, fasting, and self-denial
  - Reading and meditating on God's holy Word

## HISTORY OF LENT: WHAT'S IN A NAME

- Greek: Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή = Great 40 Days
- Latin: Quadragesima = Fortieth, 40 Days
- English from Old English from West Germanic
  - West Germanic: “langitinaz,” meaning “long-days,” or “lengthening of the day.”
  - Old English: “Lencten,” meaning “the season of spring” or “Lent, the period of fasting.”

# HISTORY OF LENT: ORIGINS

- Before 325
  - 2-3 days of fasting before Easter
- 325, Council of Nicaea
  - 1<sup>st</sup> mention of a 40 day fast
  - Likely tied to baptismal preparation

# HISTORY OF LENT: COUNTING 40 DAYS

- Eastern Churches
  - Seven weeks, Monday to Friday
  - Saturday and Sunday were exempt
    - Except for Holy Saturday
  - 36 days
- Western Churches
  - Six weeks, Monday to Saturday
  - Only Sundays were exempt
  - 36 days
- Jerusalem
  - Eight weeks, Monday to Friday
  - 40 days



## HISTORY OF LENT: COUNTING 40 DAYS

- Begins:
  - Maundy Thursday (2-3 days)
  - First Sunday in Lent (36-40 days)
- What about Ash Wednesday?
  - Origins in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Official inclusion by Gregory the Great
- Ends:
  - The Great Vigil of Easter
  - Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday
  - There have been cases where Holy Week and the Triduum sometimes considered as separate fasts from Lent

## HISTORY OF LENT: BRINGING IT FORWARD

- What does all of this variety mean for us?
  - The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing
  - With Lent: Why > How
- Does this make planning and executing our Lent easier or harder?
  - Yes
  - Pros and Cons: One size fits all vs. Tailored approach

## COMING UP

- Weekly: Touch base on Lenten disciplines and devotions
- March 3:
  - Scriptural background of the 40 days
  - Liturgy and Community
- March 10 – Practices: Self-examination, Repentance, Confession
- March 17 – Practices: Prayer, Fasting, and Self-denial
- March 24 – Practices: Reading and Meditating on God's holy Word.

## CLOSING PRAYER – COLLECT FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen