



# What is Lent?

R.C.I.A.

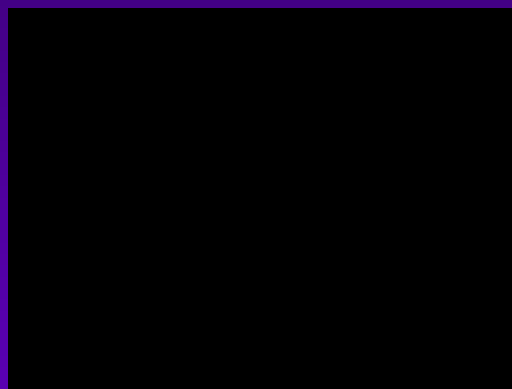
*Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish*

*February, 2018*

*Deacon Greg Meier*

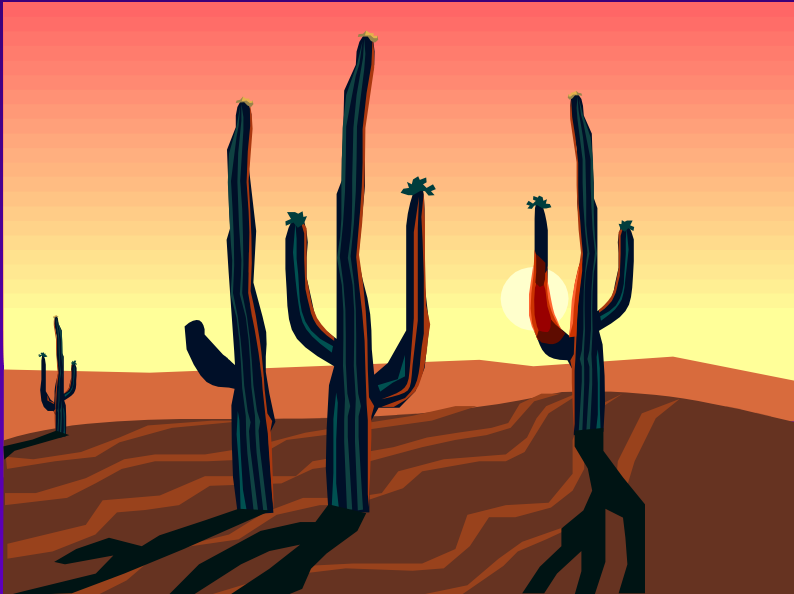


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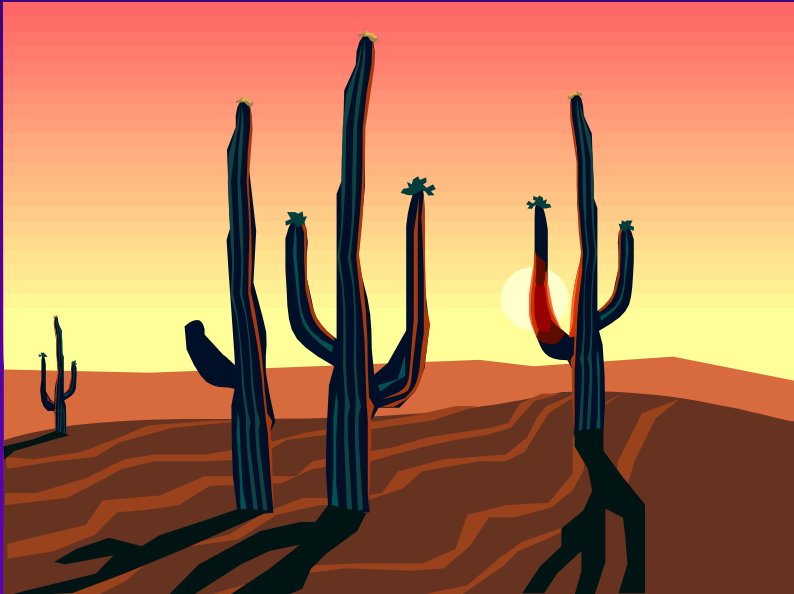
# What Is Lent?



- What do you think of when you hear the word “lent”?



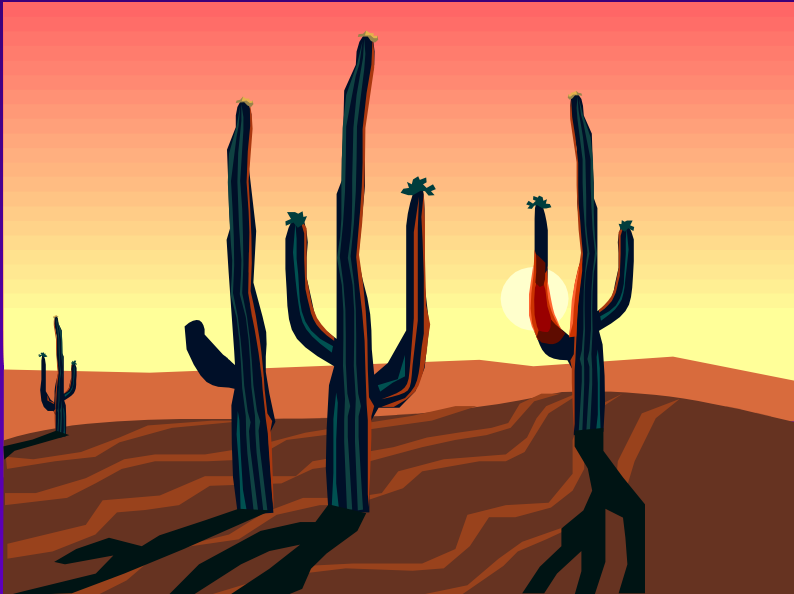
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- Other faith traditions?



# What Is Lent?



- What do you think of when you hear the word “lent”?
- Other faith traditions?
- Memories of Lent?



# Goals

- Answer the question: What is Lent?
- Scriptural sources for the season
- History of Lent
- Discuss “3 pillars” of Lent
- Describe some Catholic Practices during Lent



# Operational Definition of Lent

- Liturgical season, 40 days preceding Easter
- Springtime



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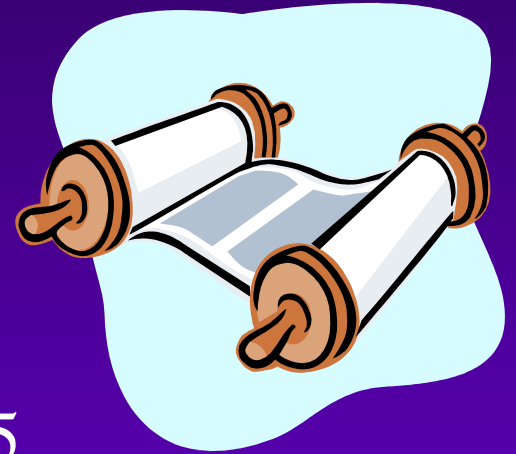
- Liturgical season, 40 days preceding Easter
- Springtime
- Baptismal Nature
- Penitential Nature





# Scriptural Sources

- The number “40”
  - Great Flood: Gn 7:4, 12,17,\*:6)
  - Moses: Ex 24:18
  - Scout Promised Land: Nm 13:25
  - Elijah: 1 Kgs 19:8
  - Temptation of Jesus: Matt 4:1-11
  - Resurrection: Acts 1:3





# Time and Place

- Wilderness
  - Abode of dangerous animals
  - Desert a place of extremes, choices more clear cut
  - A negative place, little rain, and vegetation
- Experience
  - Spiritual retreat, set time apart to focus, ask,
  - To consider, to respond



# Journey

- Israel's time in wilderness not aimless wandering...a beginning and an end; a goal
- Temptations to stop and settle
- Temptation to idolatry; past is secure, holds no surprises (we've been there)
- Transfiguration story...let us build tents



# Journey in Desert

- A place of covenant (at Mt. Sinai)
- A period of “attitude adjustment”
- A place of faith testing
- A place of presence



# Lent then....

- Lent is a wilderness experience for us
- Spring time, new life after winter
- A time of repentance and renewal
- A time of more intense prayer
- Looks forward to Easter
- With total dependence and trust in God, we will persevere



# When did Lent begin?

- 3 sources merged early 4<sup>th</sup> century
  - Ancient paschal fast that began as 2 day fast before Easter, but gradually increased to 40 days
  - Catechumenate process for preparation for baptism
  - Order of Penitents, seeking 2d conversion





# Origins of Lent, con't

- Period of fasting for 40 days began in Rome about 354 AD
- “Ash” Wednesday added to get the full 40 days of fasting (Sundays were non-fast days) (about 500 AD)
- About 780-800 use of ashes begun; a practice long in use but now given a liturgical connotation



# Origins of Lent, con't

- Ashes
  - Summon to communal penance (Joel 2:12-18)
  - St Paul's appeal to be reconciled (2 Cor 5:20\_
  - Jesus' call to alms, prayer, and fast (Matt 6:1-18)
- Genesis 3:19: Remember, man, you are dust and to dust you will return
- Mark 1:15: Repent and believe in the gospel
- ***Call to conversion***





# Origins of Lent, con't

- Palm Sunday: Holy Week
  - In Jerusalem @ 500 AD
  - Celebrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem
- Passion Sunday
  - In Rome @ 440-461 AD
  - Passion Gospel narratives read at Mass
- Palm branches and acclamation in both; universal by 9<sup>th</sup> century





# Origins of Lent, con't

- Blessing of the Holy Oils
  - Holy Thursday
  - Not until 1955 that a special “chrismal Mass” adopted in Roman rite
- Absolution Thursday
  - Holy Thursday was day of reconciliation for all penitents since 4<sup>th</sup> century



# Mass Readings of Lent

- Old Testament readings recall the events of salvation history
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Readings chosen to shed light on others
- Gospels:

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ➤ Temptation                  | ➤ Blind Man Cured             |
| ➤ Transfiguration             | ➤ Raising Of Lazarus          |
| ➤ Samaritan Woman At The Well | ➤ Entry To Jerusalem, Passion |



# Prefaces of Lent

- All special to Lent
- Ancient texts



# 3 Pillars of Lent

PRAYER



FASTING



ALMSGIVING





- Unite ourselves to the mystery of Jesus in the desert
- Reflect on history of salvation
- Spiritual exercises
- Put yourself in touch with God!



## FASTING



- Self-denial
- Penitential acts such as liturgies, reconciliation, and fraternal service such as charitable or mission works
- And of course, food



## ALMSGIVING



- Acts of charity and generosity
- Give of yourself!
- Give your heart, your kindness, your *real* self
- More than just money or cleaning out closets





# Practices during Lent

- Calendar: Sundays of Lent have precedence over feasts/solemnities
  - Weekdays of Lent over obligatory memorials
- Reconciliation / penance lead toward conversion of heart
- Few, if any, church decorations
- Music only when necessary



# Practices, con't

- “Gloria” and “Alleluia” not used in Mass
- Devotional exercises encouraged
- Reception of ashes
- Fast and abstinence
  - Ash Wednesday, Good Fridays
  - Abstinence all Fridays of Lent
- Crosses and images covered



# Devotions and Practices, con't

- Stations of the Cross--Friday
- Novenas—9 days of special prayers
- Reflections: Penitential Psalms/Suffering  
Servant
- “Mission” speakers
- All encouraged to attend daily Mass



# Questions

- *Why do we say “40” days of Lent? There are 46 days during the season.*

It might be more accurate to say that there is the "forty day fast within Lent." Historically, Lent has varied from a week to three weeks to the present configuration of 46 days. The forty day fast, however, has been more stable. The Sundays of Lent are certainly part of the Time of Lent, but they are not prescribed days of fast and abstinence.



# Questions

- *So does that mean that when we give something up for Lent, such as candy, we can have it on Sundays?*

Apart from the prescribed days of fast and abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and the days of abstinence every Friday of Lent, Catholics have traditionally chosen additional penitential practices for the whole Time of Lent. These practices are disciplinary in nature and often more effective if they are continuous, i.e., kept on Sundays as well. That being said, such practices are not regulated by the Church, but by individual conscience.

# Questions



- *The Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat, but I'm not sure what is classified as meat. Does meat include chicken and dairy products?*

Abstinence laws consider that meat comes only from animals such as chickens, cows, sheep or pigs --- all of which live on land. Birds are also considered meat. Abstinence does not include meat juices and liquid foods made from meat. Thus, such foods as chicken broth, consomme, soups cooked or flavored with meat, meat gravies or sauces, as well as seasonings or condiments made from animal fat are technically not forbidden. However, moral theologians have traditionally taught that we should abstain from all animal-derived products (except foods such as gelatin, butter, cheese and eggs, which do not have any meat taste). Fish are a different category of animal. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, (cold-blooded animals) and shellfish are permitted.

# Questions



- *I've noticed that restaurants and grocery stores advertise specials on expensive types of fish and seafood on Fridays during Lent. Some of my Catholic friends take advantage of these deals, but somehow I don't feel right treating myself to the lobster special on Fridays during Lent.*
- While fish, lobster and other shellfish are not considered meat and can be consumed on days of abstinence, indulging in the lavish buffet at your favorite seafood place sort of misses the point. Abstaining from meat and other indulgences during Lent is a penitential practice. On the Fridays of Lent, we remember the sacrifice of Christ on Good Friday and unite ourselves with that sacrifice through abstinence and prayer.

# Questions



- *Catholics ages 18 to 59 should fast on Ash Wednesday and on Good Friday, but what exactly are the rules for these fasts?*

Fasting on these days means we can have only one full, meatless meal. Some food can be taken at the other regular meal times if necessary, *but combined they should be less than a full meal*. Liquids are allowed at any time, but no solid food should be consumed between meals.





# Questions

*Are there exemptions other than for age from the requirement to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?*

Those that are excused from fast and abstinence outside the age limits include the physically or mentally ill including individuals suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Also excluded are pregnant or nursing women. In all cases, common sense should prevail, and ill persons should not further jeopardize their health by fasting.



# R.C.I.A. Practices

- Rite of Election
  - Bishop leads rite publicly announcing those who will soon receive the sacraments of initiation
- Scrutinies
  - Special communal prayers designed to help participants closely examine their lives, mindsets and attitudes. What comes between you and God? A value check.



# Chrism Mass

- During “Holy Week”
- Bishop presides
- Presentation, mixing, and blessing of Holy Oils used throughout the diocese all year long
- Reception of the oils by the parishes and institutions



# Sacred Oils

- Oil of the Infirm (Anointing of the Sick)
- Oil of Catechumens (Anointing at Baptism—strengthening against powers of the devil)
- Sacred Chrism (Confirmation and Baptism—perfumed oil—Holy Spirit)



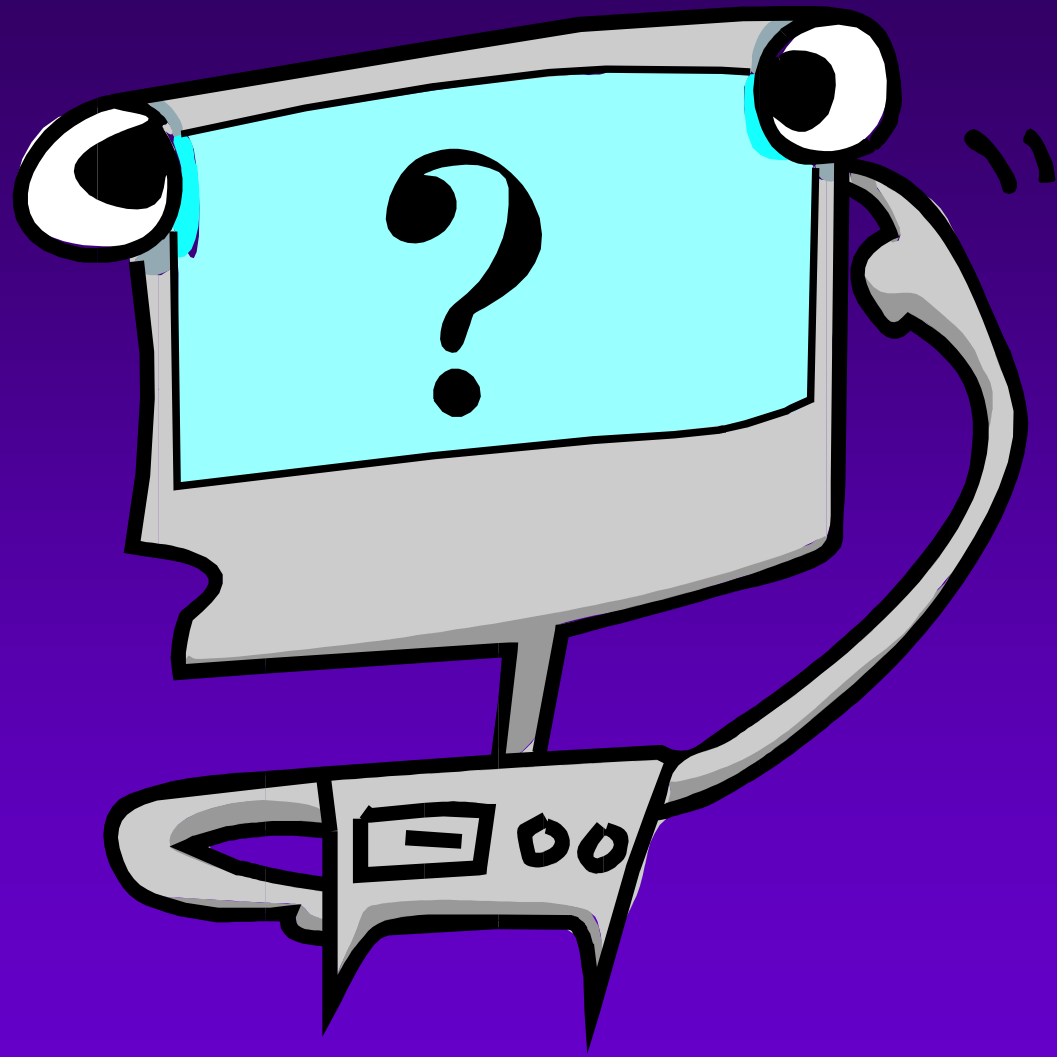


Lenten season ends with celebration of the  
Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy  
Thursday—which begins the Easter  
Triduum



# In Summary

- Lent has solid scriptural basis
- Two characteristics are baptism and penance
- Ancient liturgical practices merge beginning in 4<sup>th</sup> century
- Journey toward Easter marked by intense prayer and spiritual practices aimed toward conversion of heart and baptismal promises





3 DAYS

The Easter Triduum





# Holy Week

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- Palm Sunday
- Chrism Mass
- Mass of the Lord's Supper
- The Lord's Passion
- Easter Vigil
- Resurrection of the Lord



# Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday

- Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem
- People shouting Hosanna!
- Palm Branches
- Same People will call on Pilate to Crucify Jesus
- Customary to take the blessed palm branches home





# Chrism Mass

- Two movements:
  - Rededication of all the priests of our Diocese
  - Blessing and Distribution of Sacred Oils to the Diocese
- Presentation of the Oils
- Blessing and Mixing of the Oils
- Procession of the Parishes and Institutions of the Diocese
- Reception of the Sacred Oils from the Bishop to the Parish







# Sacred Oils

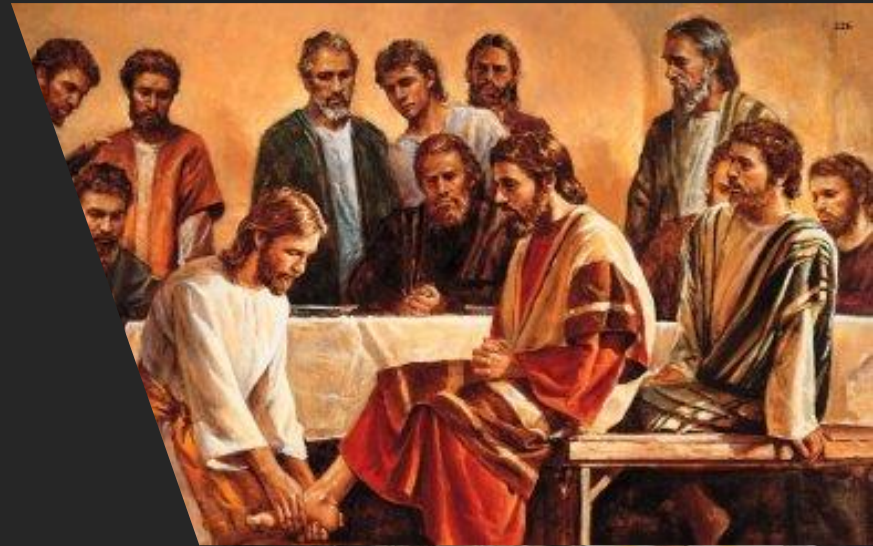
- OC: Oil of Catechumens
- OI: Oil of the Infirmed
- SC: Sacred Chrism





# Holy Thursday of the Lord's Supper

- Lent ends; Sacred Triduum begins
- Mass of the Lord's Supper
- Washing of the Feet
- No Dismissal like usual
- Eucharistic Procession
- Adoration in special reserved space
- All depart in silence



# Good Friday (of the Passion of the Lord)



- Entrance in silence
- No Mass today—a continuation of the 3 days
- Reading of the Passion Narrative
- Special Prayers of Intercession
- Unveiling and veneration of the cross
- Holy Communion
- All depart in silence





# Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday)

- Service of Light
  - Blessing of new fire and Paschal Candle
  - Chanting of the *Exsultet* (Easter Proclamation)
  - Light grows from Paschal Candle
- Vigil Readings of Salvation History
- Joyous music and bells return to Mass
- Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation
- Alleluia (double at dismissal) returns



# Easter Sunday



- **Renewal of Baptismal Promises**
- **Joyful praise**
- **Triduum ends**
- **Easter Season begins: 50 days of joyful praise**
- **Pentecost ends Easter Season**