



THE SEASON OF LENT

FEBRUARY 26 - APRIL 9

LENT is a season in the Christian calendar that invites us to deepen our discipleship through intentional reflection on the suffering of Jesus and our need for redemption. It is a period of 6 weeks culminating in the Holy week and Easter. Originally Lent was a time for new converts to prepare for baptism on Easter Sunday. Over the years this practice expanded to the whole Christian community, primarily as a call to repentance and self-denial. This is why Christians fast during Lent. Fasting is a tangible way of pulling one's life – heart, thoughts, habits – into the way of self-denial.

LAMBRICK PARK CHURCH

SHROVE TUESDAY The day before Lent (this year, February 25) is called Shrove Tuesday (or Pancake Day or Fat Tuesday). It was traditionally the last chance to use up the foods Christians would not be eating during the Lenten fast. This great feast day continues to take place in cities all over the world. Would you consider gathering with friends and neighbours to celebrate God's goodness and look forward together to the season to come?



Hanging in our sanctuary through Lent is a painting based on *Agnus Dei* (1635–40), by the Spanish Baroque artist Francisco de Zurbarán. Lamb of God (Latin: *Agnus Dei*) is a title for Jesus that appears in John 1:29, where John the Baptist proclaims of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Reproduction by Janet Anderson 2019

ASH WEDNESDAY (February 26) On this day many churches hold services during which Christians are marked on the forehead with a cross of ashes. This is a sign of our mortality, as well as a sign of reliance upon God for strength to turn away from wrong-doing (repentance). The ashes come from burning the previous year's palm leaves from Palm Sunday. It is a time of humble trust that the God who breathed us to life from dust the first time will do it again in the resurrection.

PALM SUNDAY On the last Sunday before Easter (April 5) we recall Jesus' welcomed entry into Jerusalem as King. This day is a mixture of joy and triumph combined with pain and sadness. We rejoice with the crowds in declaring Christ to be the Messiah, but we recognize that soon the same people will turn and call for His death on a cross. Those who on this day exclaimed "Hosanna!" (literally meaning "Save, I pray") would in a few short days yell "Crucify him!"

LAMBRICK PARK CHURCH

GOOD FRIDAY (April 10) The darkest day of the Christian year is called 'good' because of the benefits Jesus won for all people through his death on the cross. The theologian Alexander Schmemmann speaks of good Friday as a "bright sadness"; we recognize the sinfulness that alienates us from God, and the human evil that nailed Jesus to the cross, and lament. At the same time, we understand that by His death Jesus secured for us forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life. Good Friday pulls us into the tension of present darkness and present goodness. We are like prisoners whose release draws near, or refugees on our way back home, or patients for whom the cure is working.

HOLY SATURDAY (April 11) is also called Silent Saturday. On this day we recognize the suffering and bewilderment of the disciples, calling to mind our own areas of pain and confusion, and the suffering of those around us and across the world. Like Good Friday, we now see our pain in light of Easter Sunday, with hope and confidence in our God who loves us and is working for us, even in our moments of darkness and silence.

EASTER SUNDAY (April 12) is not a part of Lent but the first day of a new Liturgical season that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. This season of Easter lasts for 50 days (April 12 - May 31), culminating in Pentecost. The spirit of this season is celebratory, joyful and bright; Easter is one long feast! It is fitting that it should last longer than Lent, that feasting should exceed the fasting. A great way to hold this perspective during this season is by feasting in some way: host dinner parties; go out with friends after church on Sunday; allow yourself some culinary treat as a reminder of God's extravagance towards you; or add a daily practice – a walk in the forest, a trip to the beach, pick flowers, or listen to music – something that helps you feed on God's beauty and goodness.

A WORD ON PARTICIPATING IN LENT

Sadly, over the years Lent has simply turned into a season for fasting from chocolate, coffee, sugar, tv, Facebook, etc. For many it has lost its true meaning and purpose. We end up giving up something, labouring hard to do it, and in the end celebrating or grieving how we succeeded or not.

But where is Christ in all of that?

What if we embraced Lent as a season to uniquely listen for and follow Jesus's leading? Or to unclutter our days so as to give more of our heart and attention to God's work and desires for us? This may involve fasting from something that has become an idol in our lives. *But let's not just give something up.* Let's look for ways to follow our Crucified Lord - for God's glory, for the sake of the world, and for our joy in Him.

WANT HELP DIGGING DEEPER?

- ~ Check out the **40acts** generosity challenge (40acts.org.uk)
 - ~ Biola University will email you a free daily reflection, including artwork, scripture readings and music.
- Sign up here: <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2020>

"Lion of Judah"

by Janet Anderson, 2019

In Revelation 5:5 Jesus is referred to as a Lion. Christians have long found hope and comfort in the metaphor of a lion to represent the strength, supremacy, and fierce power of our Saviour who fights for us and for the world.

Pictured with the sacrificial lamb this Easter season, we are reminded of the dual nature of Jesus - humble to death, victorious in resurrection power.

