



Lent/Easter

BACKGROUND/FACT SHEET

Overview

- **Lent** is the 40-day season of preparation for Easter that ends on Holy Thursday, three days before Easter Sunday. During Lent, Catholics recall their baptism and do penance – fasting, prayer, and almsgiving as they commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ.
- **Easter** is the most important of Feast in the Christian calendar. During this time Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ. It is a movable feast and may be as early as March 22 and as late as April 25.
- Purple (violet) is the colour of the Lenten liturgical season.

Lent – Holy Week – Easter Triduum – Easter Season

Lent

What is Ash Wednesday? It marks the beginning of the liturgical season of Lent. Palms from the previous Palm Sunday are burned – ashes from these palms are distributed on Ash Wednesday as a sign of penitence.

Why do Catholics traditionally give something up during Lent? To do penance in preparation for the greatest feast in the Christian calendar.

What is fast and abstinence? Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are universal days of fast and abstinence. Catholics still consider Fridays throughout Lent as days of abstinence. Anyone over the age of 18 and under the age of 59 are obliged to fast and abstain. Fasting, in the Latin Church, is the limitation of food and drink – typically to one main meal and two smaller meals, with no solid foods in between. Abstaining, in this context, is the refraining from certain kinds of food or drink, typically meat. In lieu of fasting, one may substitute works of charity.

What is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and how is it associated with Lent? Easter is both the historical and proper time for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation. On the first Sunday of Lent, the catechumens (unbaptized people seeking admission in the Catholic Church) celebrate the Rite of Election and enter into the final period of preparation for the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. Adults are baptized (or brought into full communion for baptized non-Catholics), confirmed, and receive first Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. In the Archdiocese of Toronto, over 1100 men and women were brought into full communion with the Catholic Church in 2005.

What is Palm Sunday? Also called Passion Sunday, it is the Sunday before Easter. Palms are distributed as a reminder of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Holy Week

What is Holy Week and what happens during this time? The final week of preparation before Easter Sunday, these days recount Christ's final days on earth. On the Tuesday of Holy Week, the priests of the Archdiocese of Toronto gather for the Mass of Chrism held at St. Michael's Cathedral.

What is the Mass of Chrism? Is a special Mass, held in Toronto at St. Michael's Cathedral for the priests of the Archdiocese of Toronto, on the Tuesday of Holy Week. At the Chrism Mass the holy oils used in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and Sacrament of the Sick are blessed and supplied to the local parishes for use.

What is the oil of Chrism made from? Traditionally, the oil consists of a mixture of olive oil and balsam, however, if necessary, holy oils may be from any plant and not only from olives.

Easter Triduum

What is the Triduum and when does Lent end? Lent ends on Holy Thursday. Holy Thursday evening through Easter Sunday is the three day period called the Triduum where we remember Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

What is Holy Thursday? It is at this special celebration that we remember and celebrate Jesus' gift of the Eucharist. It is the night when we renew our mandate to serve one another in the washing of the feet, which first took place at the Last Supper.

What is Good Friday? Good Friday is the day that we recognize as the day that Jesus died on the cross.

What are the Stations of the Cross? The Stations of the Cross commemorate Jesus' journey from Pilate's court to Calvary where he was crucified. Jesus' mother Mary is believed to have often retraced the sorrowful way her Son made of Good Friday.

What is Holy Saturday? Commemorates the period where Jesus' body lay in the tomb. Easter begins with the Easter Vigil – during these services, catechumens (those preparing to join the Catholic Church) are baptized and brought into full Communion with the Catholic Church.

Easter Season

What is Easter Sunday and how does it differ from the Easter Season? Easter Sunday is the day when Catholics celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead. The Easter Season totals 50 days - Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. The Easter Season is a time for reflection on and deepening of our awareness of the mysteries prepared for in Lent and celebrated at the Triduum.

What is Pentecost? Pentecost is celebrated 50 days after Easter Sunday. It is the Christian feast commemorating the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, which marked the start of the church's mission on earth.