

Bringing Home the Faith- Lent

This year we move into the season of Lent later than usual with our annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper followed the next day by Ash Wednesday services. Come join us Tuesday night and enjoy pancakes together, decorate and “bury” our Alleluia banner, and then finish the evening burning palms to use for the ashen cross that will be marked on our foreheads the next day. And then return Wednesday for Ash Wednesday services at 7:00 a.m., noon, and 7:30 p.m.

Traditions and rituals such as these don't need many words for children, and adults, to absorb their impact. Watching the burning of the palms, seeing the brightly colored alleluia go away and return at Easter, eating pancakes in Christian fellowship- these are markers of meaning in and of themselves, and when families participate each year in such rituals, they acquire a power beyond simply their literal meaning...they become a ritual part of our lives, invitations to turn back to God, to what is deep and meaningful and true about our lives..

All that being said, what follows are basic teaching points for this season:

-Shrove Tuesday- the day before Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent. Also known as Mardi gras (Fat Tuesday), because it was a day of revelry and removing the “fat” from the house before this season of penitence and fasting. Shrove Tuesday is so named because of the traditional “shrivings” or confessions and absolutions that were performed on this day in preparation for Lent.

-Ash Wednesday- Falls 46 days before Easter (or the symbolic 40 days not counting Sundays). The name comes from the practice of receiving an ashen cross on the forehead as a sign of our mortality and of our Easter hope and faith. The ashes come from the burned palms of the previous years Palm Sunday, recalling the circle of life and our liturgical seasons.

Lent- the season of Lent is forty days not including Sundays. This symbolic number recalls Jesus fasting 40 days in the wilderness, the Israelites wandering in the wilderness forty years, the flood of forty days and nights in the story of Noah. This season is marked by a “turning back” to God through prayer, to fasting (giving something up or as some now do, taking on a particular discipline) and almsgiving (sharing and caring for those in need).

This Lent, the children will be bringing home mesh bags and cut out paper fish. For every prayer, good deed, kind word shared, we encourage you to give them a fish to put in their “net.” And for each fish they “catch” we encourage you to share with them an agreed upon amount of money, such as a quarter. On Palm Sunday they will bring these coins to church. Then on Easter Sunday, during the 9:00 am service, we will celebrate their efforts and give thanks for the coins collected. All proceeds will go towards our diocesan wide initiative to raise money for “NetsforLife,” a mission of Episcopal Relief and Development that purchases mosquito netting to prevent the spread of malaria in Africa.







