

What is the purpose of fasting during Lent? What is so holy about Holy Week? What does “Triduum” mean and how does it relate to Easter?

Intro

Pat and I have divided the question between us in the following way. I am going to answer the first two questions and Pat is going to cover the last two questions. Now, if you count, there are only three questions, which means Pat and I are both covering the second question, “What is so holy about Holy Week?” The difference is that I am going to focus on the very first Holy Week, the one Jesus lived, and Pat is going to focus on modern Holy Week, the one we re-live *liturgically*, every year.

Lent

The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “*lengten*” which means spring. Lent is a holy and penitential season of renewal in the Church year, dedicated to the repudiation of sin in our lives and pursuit of increased unity with our suffering savior. That unity extends through the austerity of the fast in the desert, through the intense suffering of the passion and then also through to the immense joy of the resurrection.

Fasting

Fasting has been one of three established norms (Alms, Prayer & Fasting) for an improved relationship with God. The prescription is in the Old Testament. See Isaiah 58 and Matthew 6. (attached on back) We used to fast (only one full meal a day except Sunday with meat once a day and not on Fridays) all Lent. Now we just fast on Ash Wed and Good Friday and abstain from meat on Fridays. We are supposed to focus on improvements of character with the available energy.

Why 40 days?

Because we are following the example of Jesus as he fasted in the desert. (First Sunday of Lent, Matthew 4:2) “After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.” He was preparing for his public ministry. Because he was sinless his temptations were external. We also are preparing for something big, Easter, but for us, our main lenten battles are internal. There are some beautiful Gospels during Lent:

Day		Scripture
Ash Wednesday	Proper Fasting	Isaiah 58, Mt 6
1st Sunday of Lent	Jesus in the Desert	Mt 4
2nd Sunday of Lent	Jesus and Nicodemus	Jn 3 or Mt 17
3rd Sunday of Lent	Jesus and the woman at the well	Jn 4
4th Sunday of Lent	Jesus cures the man born blind	Jn 9
5th Sunday of Lent	Raising of Lazarus	Jn 11
6th Sunday of Lent	Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem; Passion	Mt 21; Mt 26-27

Holy Week

Holy week begins with the “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem and carries through to the crucifixion and burial of Jesus in the tomb.

Day	Event	Place	Scripture
Saturday	Mary (Lazarus’ sister) anoints Jesus for burial; Rebuke of Judas	Bethany	Mt 26, Mk 14, Jn 12
Palm Sunday	Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem; Jesus weeps for Jerusalem; Jesus prophesies his own death	Mount Olivet; Temple	Mt 21, Mk 11, Lk 19, Jn 12; Jn 12
Monday	Fig tree withers (Living parable - the call to Israel)	Mount Olivet	Mt 21, Mk 11, Lk 19
Tuesday	Preaching in the Temple: Who’s authority?, Unfaithful Vine-dressers, Wedding Feast, Test questions(Caesar, Whose wife?), Seven “Woe to you’s..”	Temple	Mt 21, Mk 11, Lk 20
Wednesday	Treachery of Judas	Jerusalem	Mt 26, Mk 14, Jn 12
Holy Thursday	Peter and John prepare the supper; Jesus washes feet; the Betrayal announced; the Eucharist; Holy orders initiated; foretelling Peter denial; Love one another; Agony in the Garden; Jesus arrested	Jerusalem; Cenacle; Gethsemani	Mt 26, Mk 14, Lk 22; Jn14-18
Good Friday	Questions before Sanhedrin, Condemned by council, Judas hangs himself, Jesus condemned by Pilate, Scourging and Crucifixion, Death and Burial	Caiphas’ house; Hakeldama; Antonia; Golgotha	Mt 26-27, Mk 14-15, Lk 22-23, Jn 18-19
Holy Saturday	Roman guard set at the tomb	Golgotha	Mt 27
Easter Sunday	The Tomb is Empty; Jesus appears to Magdalen; Road to Emmaus; Jesus comes to Apostles	Golgotha; Emmaus; Cenacle	Mt 28, Mk 16, Lk 24, Jn 20

Readings from Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58: 1-12

True Fasting

3
 'Why have we fasted,' they say,
 'and you have not seen it?
 Why have we humbled ourselves,
 and you have not noticed?'

4
 Your fasting ends in quarreling and
 strife, and in striking each other with
 wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do
 today and expect your voice to be
 heard on high.

5
 ...Is that what you call a fast,
 a day acceptable to the Lord?

7
 Is it not to share your food with the
 hungry and to provide the poor
 wanderer with shelter—
 when you see the naked, to clothe
 them, and not to turn away from your
 own flesh and blood?

8
 Then your light will break forth like the
 dawn, and your healing will quickly
 appear; then your righteousness[a]
 will go before you, and the glory of
 the Lord will be your rear guard.

Matthew 6: 1-6,16-21 **Alms**

6 "Be careful not to practice your
 righteousness in front of others to be
 seen by them. If you do, you will have
 no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 "So when you give to the needy, do
 not announce it with trumpets, as the
 hypocrites do in the synagogues and on
 the streets, to be honored by others.
 Truly I tell you, they have received their
 reward in full. **3** But when you give to
 the needy, do not let your left hand

know what your right hand is doing,
4 so that your giving may be in secret.
 Then your Father, who sees what is
 done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

5 "And when you pray, do not be like
 the hypocrites, for they love to pray
 standing in the synagogues and on the
 street corners to be seen by others.
 Truly I tell you, they have received their
 reward in full. **6** But when you pray, go
 into your room, close the door and pray
 to your Father, who is unseen. Then
 your Father, who sees what is done in
 secret, will reward you. **7** And when
 you pray, do not keep on babbling like
 pagans, for they think they will be
 heard because of their many words.
8 Do not be like them, for your Father
 knows what you need before you ask
 him. (introduces the Our Father)

Fasting

16 "When you fast, do not look somber
 as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure
 their faces to show others they are
 fasting. Truly I tell you, they have
 received their reward in full. **17** But
 when you fast, put oil on your head and
 wash your face, **18** so that it will not be
 obvious to others that you are fasting,
 but only to your Father, who is unseen;
 and your Father, who sees what is done
 in secret, will reward you.

**Joel 2:31 Blood Moon/ Acts 2: 14 (Not
 drunk, this is what Joel was talking about)**
 The sun will be turned to darkness and the
 moon to blood before the coming of the
 great and dreadful day of the Lord.

References:

Knox - Cox, The Gospel Story

The Gospel story, based on the translation of the four Gospels by Ronald Knox, arranged in a continuous narrative with explanations by Ronald Cox. New York, Sheed and Ward [1958]

What Is Lent?

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PAENITEMINI (Apostolic Constitution on Penance) Pope Paul VI, Feb 17, 1966.

7 clues tell us *precisely* when Jesus died (the year, month, day and hour revealed) by Jimmy Akin

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The Moon Shall Be Turned Into Blood

(Astronomic Aspects in Dating the Life of Christ)

www.scienceandapologetics.org