

A Conspectus of the Final Days of Lent Before Easter

① Introduction

The Bible is an anthology of diverse writings. The Bible also is the sacred scripture of Judaism = OT and Christianity = OT and NT. As the Bible came to be a written work, it is also acknowledged as a work that passed from an oral tradition and then was committed to the written word. Moreover, there are clearly four distinctive sources in the OT works that are somewhat like editorial expositions. These sources are J E D P - Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomistic, and Priestly. These sources often overlap, but they are an important resource for our understanding that the Bible is the story of the redemptive activity of God, an invaluable asset to understand the *Heilsgeschichte* - the story of salvation, from the beginning in Genesis to the apocalypse of the final book of the NT.

Scholars who study the Bible have done so for thousands of years. They have scrupulously approached the study and exposition of the time-honored tradition of understanding the Word of God with earnestness, respect, and a persistent desire to open up the sanctity of God's revelation as a way of knowing the majesty of the presence of the Lord in our daily lives.

② The Liturgical Year and Sacred Scripture

The unfolding of the various liturgical seasons is bolstered thematically by using appropriate Biblical readings to reinforce and amplify the unity of God's Word and our practice of the faith. Consequently, liturgically aware that the liturgy is public worship and faithful practice of the sacred sacrament and are both essential to demonstrate *who God* is and how we understand God's connective interaction with the whole human race.

③ The Liturgical Seasons and Their Important Relevance

The Sunday Liturgy is a three-year cycle - Yr A, B, C. The daily liturgy is Yr 1, Yr 2. The Liturgy of the Word is organized around a standard format. On Sundays, the liturgy of the Word revolves upon two readings, a responsorial psalm, and the gospel. The readings are bonded to a theme and meant to be instructive.

Each year the liturgical year commences with the First Sunday of Advent and lasts for four more weeks on a journey with God with faith and good works around the coming of light, the glorious celebration of the Incarnation, the birth of Christ. After the solemn occasion of the Christmas Octave, the liturgy providentially follows various events until the Baptism of the Lord that closes the Advent-Christmas Season.

Following the Christmas mystery, the Church turns its attention to Ordinary Time. The purpose of these weeks is to focus on the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth - a charismatic preacher who arrived on earth to prepare us for the Kingdom of Heaven and the unfolding of God's plan for us.

Ordinary Time ends for a while, so that with the arrival of Ash Wednesday, we begin, we observe prayer, penance and perseverance during the 40-day discipline of Lent. With the passing unassuming days of Lent, we pray and prepare, aware of, the shortening winter days as we anticipate spring and nature's rebirth.

Each week of Lent focuses on the Paschal Mystery, the death of Jesus who, by the miracle of the Resurrection, an anticipated hope of eternity realized on Lenten days, and that calls us to remember God's plan for us. It does not serve as a reenactment but rather a recall to mind the power and wisdom of Christ's Cross.

④ The Season of Lent as a Revelation of God's Goodness

The discipline of Lent is both a religious hope and a teaching moment. In the beginning, God created the physical world for humankind, and life, albeit a graced gift from God, and is also a metaphysical moment, a sacred reality wherein the people of God acknowledge the transient fragility of life as we know it to the eternal bliss of eternal life with Christ. The Cross becomes a vindication by Christ our Eucharistic Lord.

⑤ The Scripture Readings of Lent

The Scripture Readings of Lent are a mini-version of the sacred journey that we travel and a brief exposition of the scripture readings of Lent as they show God's salvific plan and progresses to show the anticipation of Easter.

Ash Wednesday where Lent begins is a time to examine our lives carefully and to cast ourselves and from those things that keep us from loving God and each other.

First Sunday of Lent

We begin Lent by reflecting upon the creation of humanity and upon the entrance of sin into our human experience.

Second Sunday of Lent

The choice of Abraham, and the promise to him: "I will make of you a great nation," and the call of faith's fulfillment.

Third Sunday of Lent

The Israelites wander in the wilderness, remaining there, traveling for 40 days in order to learn how to trust in the Lord.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

The Israelites ask for a king to rule over them. Saul is chosen, but David is God's anointed, chosen by Samuel the prophet. The Lord chooses according to what is in a person's heart. David becomes king and reigns for 40 years.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel enters the valley of dry bones and preaches to the bones who are filled with God's breath and spirit and who are brought back to life. Resurrection hope focuses on the resurrection of the nation of Israel as well as the individual. It is the Spirit of the Lord that revives true, neverending life.

Holy Week

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Lent has finally brought us to the beginning of Holy Week, the most sacred week of the liturgical year. Jesus the Suffering Servant rides into Jerusalem. He brings consolation to the weary, even while he is the victim of terrible suffering. Jesus, through many of the things he said, demonstrates that he consecrated himself to be the Incarnation of God's love. Through his Passion, he fulfills the prophecy of redemptive suffering. "Hosanna, YHWH save."

And so Holy Week continues...

Monday – Wednesday are quiet days of preparation, highlighted by prayer, patience, and perseverance to the potential arrival of our deliverance from sin. The Chrism Mass is celebrated this week for clergy to renew their promises to serve Christ and his bishops.

Holy Thursday - The Mass of the Last Supper

The Mass of the Last Supper is celebrated on Holy Thursday. Jesus celebrates a meal with his disciples and mandates them to be instruments of reconciliation. The sacred oils were consecrated and distributed at the earlier Chrism Mass for the forgiveness of sins and healing.

The Sacred Paschal Triduum

The Triduum is a sacred event of three days remembering the Passion of Christ as a continuum of three days ritualized as one day: Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The Easter Vigil Mass and the proximate preparation of the celebration of the Sacraments, namely Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, brings the Paschal Mystery to fruition. A beautiful, powerful ceremony, the Easter Vigil anticipates the dawn of the great mystery of our faith, the Resurrection, and is a Day of Triumph, the empty tomb, the corporeal appearance of a Risen Jesus to the disciples.

And so this conspectus has humbly attempted to illuminate the Paschal Mystery:

1. Ash Wednesday
2. The 40 Days of Lent
3. Palm Sunday and Holy Week
4. The Sacred Paschal Triduum
 - The Lord's Supper
 - Good Friday
 - Holy Saturday
5. Easter and, the following 50 Days of Easter
6. Pentecost, the remembrance of the Holy Spirit descending on us the people of God.

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