



From Epiphany to Lent

This month Epiphany ends and Lent begins on Ash Wednesday.



As we wrap up Epiphany

The season after Epiphany began with the story of the arrival of the Magi and concludes on Ash Wednesday. This year we focus on stories from the Gospel of Mark. In February, our Gospel readings are all about Jesus' early ministry—a ministry of calling, healing, and teaching. Jesus reaches out to make people's lives better. Read through the first 9 chapters of Mark and see what you find.



Ash Wednesday is February 25th. On this day, we focus on our complete sinfulness and the necessity of Christ's suffering and death to insure our salvation. Ashes are referred to many times in the Old Testament as signs of sorrow, mourning, humility, and repentance, and on Ash Wednesday they are used to remind people of their mortality; that "you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). We use ashes during Ash Wednesday worship in a ritual called the Imposition of Ashes. In this custom, ashes from palm leaves are mixed with a small amount of oil and applied to the forehead of each worshipper.

Preparing for Lent

Lent is a time to return to those spiritual practices that give us life and keep us centered on God. Here are some ideas.

- **Give something up during Lent.** Give up something that you enjoy as a daily reminder of the suffering of Jesus. Some ideas: meat, desserts, TV, candy, movies, shopping, pop, etc.
- **Return to Discipline.** Recommit yourself to daily devotions, reading, prayers at bedtime, mealtime prayers, family prayer time, attending Wednesday Lenten services. Pick any discipline you would like.
- **Make a Lenten Candle Cross.** Use wooden logs to make a cross. Drill 6 holes for candles. Light one candle each week of Lent. Use it just as you would use an Advent wreath. A different idea would be to plant a flower bulb in a pot and watch it grow all through Lent.
- **Offering for the Poor.** Collecting money or food for the poor is an act of discipleship that recalls the practice of almsgiving. You can give to the ELCA hunger fund or on a more personal level, you may choose to assemble health kits or collect canned goods for our community food bank.

Other Days to Celebrate in February

Valentine's Day February 14th - Valentine was a bishop of Italy during the early 15th century. Valentine suffered martyrdom for his faith on February 14th. Valentine is one of the church's saints. St. Valentine is associated with springtime love. Read a book about St. Valentine and do a random act of love. Show your love for God by serving someone else.



Martin Luther Remembrance Day February 18th - The great reformer Martin Luther ushered in the Protestant Reformation. Luther's courage and faith remains an inspiration for all Christians. Read a book about Martin Luther (we have some in our library) or watch the movie Luther. You can also look up Luther's most popular hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

In Christ's service,
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