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**March 10, 2011**

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## **40 Days of Lent**

**Dear Readers,**

Lent is 40 days long. That number 40 is a significant number. It harkens all the way back to the great deluge where it rained on Noah, his family, and the pairs of creatures for 40 days. It also causes us to remember that during the exodus the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the Promised Land.

In I Kings there is that story of Elijah on Mount Horeb. It is the story of how Elijah, sitting under the solitary broom tree, asks that he might die. He falls asleep and when he awakens he eats a cake and drinks a jar of water that has been provided for him by an angel. This happens again, and we are told that he goes in the strength of that food for 40 days. He fasts for 40 days. Read this wonderful story in I Kings 19.

As we become acquainted with the ministry of Jesus in the New Testament, the writers of the synoptic gospels all tell how Jesus is first baptized and then tempted in the wilderness. The time frame they associate with his being in the wilderness is 40 days.



Lent is 40 days long. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with the Day of Resurrection (Easter Day). The very interesting fact is that Sundays are not counted with those 40 days. So from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day there are 46 days.

The obvious question to ask is why don't Sundays count in the days of Lent? Lent is a penitential season where we as Christian people are to spend intentional time with acknowledging our limitations, our sinfulness, and our mortality. We are to spend the time considering and reflecting on the reality of the cross and how the Son of Humanity was crucified, suffering the depths and fullness of human pain.

At the same time Sunday (commonly called "the Lord's Day" in the Christian dialect) has always been the day in which Christians gather for worship. Saturday, the Sabbath, had always been the day for worship until the onset of the Christian Era when worshippers gathered on the first day of the week rather than on the last. Why? To worship on the first day of the week, Sunday,



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is to practice a mini-resurrection every week. So, the church gathers in the joy of the resurrection not only on Easter Day and for the season of Easter (50 days long), but every single week on the first day of the week there is this mini-Easter celebration.

The pattern we are invited into during Lent is to spend Monday through Saturday in penitence and in reflection, and then spend Sunday in celebration and thanksgiving. Sunday's are also to be a time of reflection for what we have learned, realized, or been lead to in our week of intensive spiritual work. In summary, that is the point of Lent—for it to be a purposely spiritual season where we listen and contemplate and put into action what God is leading us to do and be as disciples.

Worship is purposefully a spiritual experience. We approach God in quietness and with an expectation that God will both move and speak among us and to us. We are spiritual people on quest!! What an amazing journey is this Lent!

Blessings,  
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