

## Season's roots

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light evening meal in addition to the main noontime meal. It was only in the 19th century that the custom of eating breakfast on fast days was introduced, Weiser concluded.

Abstaining from dairy products was never seriously enforced in northern and northwestern Europe because of the lack of substitute foods in such regions as Great Britain, Ireland and Scandinavia. In fact, when the church published its updated Code of Canon Law in 1918, it omitted dairy products from the list of foods from which to abstain.

In today's church, the Lenten fast still exists in the practice of meatless Fridays, along with the practice of taking only one full meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

In addition to fasting, public acts of penance have marked the Lenten season throughout the centuries, according to several experts.

Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, noted that Ash Wednesday survives as a remnant of bygone eras when the church accepted the public repentance of such serious sinners as apostates, heretics and murderers. In the early church, she pointed out, such public penitents would be brought to the local bishop in sackcloth and ashes as sign of their desire for forgiveness and public recommitment to the Christian community.



In his 1978 book "The Liturgical Year," Adolf Adam observed that "although the institution of public ecclesiastical penance disappeared toward the end of the first millennium, this rite of ashes was retained and applied now to all the faithful.

"At the Synod of Benevento (1091 A.D.)," Adam continued, "Pope Urban II recommended this custom to all the churches. Clerics and laymen had the ashes sprinkled on their heads, while women had a sign of the cross made with ashes on their forehead."

A special blessing for the ashes themselves appeared in the 11th century, and by the following century, the church had ruled that the ashes be obtained by burning the palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday.

Interestingly, Adam noted, the Second Vatican Council's reforms were

marked by an effort to restore many church practices to their original meaning. However, church authorities reorganizing Lenten liturgy decided against reverting to Sunday as the first day of Lent, and maintained Ash Wednesday as the season's beginning. Through the centuries, Ash Wednesday had taken on far more importance among the faithful than most holy days, the church realized.

"Ash Wednesday has reached the kind of significance that a holy day has, despite the fact that there is no obligation to receive ashes," Workmaster mused.

However, Vatican II did call the church to return Lent to its proper place as a time of baptismal preparation, Workmaster explained. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults most clearly illustrates this restoration, she said, pointing out that all catechumens now are baptized on Easter Sunday.

Additionally, RCIA candidates now participate in the "scrutinies," a practice restored to Lenten Masses after Vatican II. On the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent, parishes preparing RCIA candidates celebrate the scrutinies after the Liturgy of the Word. The scrutinies call the candidates to an intense examination of conscience, Workmaster said, noting that the rite includes a series of questions directed at both the catechumens and the faithful.

The Gospel readings from Year A of the three-year liturgical reading cycle on these days are marked by baptismal themes, according to Adam. For example, on the third Sunday, John's Gospel tells of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Whoever drinks of the living water Christ provides "will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life," the Gospel states.

Just as Lent's emphasis on the conclusion of the RCIA reinforces the faithful to remember their own baptismal call, Holy Week serves as an annual church-wide remembrance of Christianity's most significant events, Workmaster explained.

The week begins with what the Roman Missal calls "Palm Sunday of the Passion of Christ," and its liturgy unites

two commemorations: that of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, when He was hailed by crowds of admirers waving palm branches, and that of His passion.

Adam points out that fifth-century Christians used to gather on the Sunday afternoon before Easter for a lengthy liturgy on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Toward evening, they would proceed into the city carrying palm or olive branches. The custom spread throughout the Eastern church, and became common in the West by the end of the eighth century, he added, noting that willow and other branches were substituted for palms in northern regions.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Adam remarked, Palm Sunday processions gradually became more elaborate and often began with a gathering outside a city's walls. Participants then proceeded to the city's main church.

Palm Sunday processions have been revived and encouraged by the church since the mid-1950s after falling out of practice in many areas, Adam explained. Today, processions take a variety of forms as allowed for in the Roman Missal.

Lent concludes on Holy Thursday, and its evening Mass, famous for its foot-washing ritual, is actually considered part of the Easter Triduum: Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

During the annual Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday morning, the bishop and presbyterate generally gather in the diocesan cathedral to bless sacred oils and the chrism, a mixture of oils and balsam or balm used for such liturgical anointings as baptism, confirmation and holy orders.

As early as the third century, the church blessed oils and chrism on Holy Thursday because baptism and confirmation were to be given during the Easter Vigil, and both the oil of the catechumens and chrism were used in these services.

The Chrism Mass also may feature a renewal of commitment to priestly service, Adam concluded, noting that the Mass emphasizes the High Priesthood of Christ. Generally, homilists are urged to call on priests to renew publicly their priestly promises, he wrote.

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The puzzle below contains the names (or one word from the names) of 20 advertisers in this week's Catholic Courier. Read this week's advertisements to complete the puzzle. Send or deliver your entry to Puzzle, c/o Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, NY 14624 or fax to 716-328-8640.

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Prizes will be awarded by random drawing of completed puzzles received by Friday, March 10. Winner will be notified by mail and their names will be published in the following week's Catholic Courier. No purchase necessary to win. Only one entry per person, please. Employees of the Catholic Courier and their immediate families are not eligible.

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Winners from the Feb. 16, Advertisers' Puzzle were Margaret Boynton, Ithaca; Marie Garman, Webster; Veronica Haley, Fairport; and James Kaseman, Rochester.

Some words in the puzzle included Penfield, Catholic, Shop, Bartolomeo, Ronald, Arndt, Bosdyk, Crystal, Barn, Kids, Dominican, Sisters, Monument, Hillside, Bonaventure, Bernard, Institute, JB, Becker, and Dans.

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Watch for our next Advertisers' Puzzle on March 16th!

## Cardinal declares praying, sharing can help heal wounds of sinfulness

HONG KONG (CNS) — Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung of Hong Kong said fasting, praying and sharing with the needy can heal the wounds that sinfulness brings.

In his pastoral letter for Lent, he reminded Catholics of the "heart-breaking images of human need as a result of both natural and man-made disasters" shown on TV screens in recent months.

The cardinal's letter was reported by UCA News, an Asian church news agency based in Thailand.

Cardinal Wu asked Catholics to contribute generously to campaigns for those in extreme need to show solidarity with the suffering and the needy.

Catholics have to acknowledge sinfulness, Cardinal Wu said. When weak-

ness causes discouragement, he said, God's compassion will fill believers with hope and lead them through a Lent of repentance to the beauty of Easter joy.

Easter is not simply one feast among others in the church's liturgical year, but the "feast of feasts," a celebration of the self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ that brings redemption, the cardinal said.

"To celebrate this great feast worthily, the church invites us during the 40 days of Lent to a renewal of mind and heart," Cardinal Wu said.

"It is our vocation to be people through whom the tremendous love of God we celebrate at Easter is made tangible. He has given us the responsibility of being the instruments of his active love in our world," he said.

## Tier churches will offer rotating Lenten Masses

A rotating 5:30 p.m. weekday Mass will be available at four Chemung County churches during Lent.

The schedule is as follows: Mondays — Our Lady of Lourdes, 304 Demarest Parkway, Elmira; Tuesdays — St. Mary Our Mother, 816 W. Broad St., Horseheads; Wednesdays and Fridays — St. Mary, 224 Franklin St., Elmira; and Thursdays — St. Cecilia, 950 Lake St., Elmira.

Each Christian needs half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy, then we need an hour.

St. Francis de Sales