

Shrovetide and Lent

Today (March 3, 2019), we have entered a penitential triduum which connects Pre-Lententide to Lent. It is called Shrovetide and consists of days known in English as Shrove Sunday (Quinquagesima), Shrove Monday and Shrove Tuesday. Shrove Tuesday, being the last day before Lent, is also called 'Mardi Gras' in French or Pancake Tuesday in English, and is the time of the carnival; it is also the Feastday of the Holy Face of Jesus, and the entire time of Pre-lententide is especially proper to that devotion. It's proper to eat pancakes or indulge in some treat on Shrove Tuesday in the evening, but participating in riotous rejoicing is not properly Catholic.

Father noted today that Lent does not include the Sundays of Lent. This is why we have two nouns in English to refer generally to the same period. Lententide does include the Sundays and weekdays of the Season but Lent itself consists of only the weekdays in the period. We do not fast or abstain or mortify on the Sundays, as Sunday is the Lord's Day. At one time, we also could not fast on Thursdays and Saturdays, making Lententide much longer, as it had to consist of forty days of fasting. At that time, Lent began the day after Septuagesima Sunday. Once fasting was allowed on Thursdays and Saturdays, Septuagesima Sunday came to open a new preparatory Season of Pre-lententide. This was an excellent example of organic development under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit. For that reason, the reformers in the 1960s were dead wrong to abolish Pre-lententide for the New Mass, just as they were dead wrong in most of their other revolutionary changes. Pray for the day when tradition may triumph and all things are restored in Christ.

A good example of these erroneous changes was the reduction of the Lenten Fast to the status of a joke: few bother to fast for only Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. While we are no longer bound at law to observe the traditional fast, we should do so out

of love of God and because it imposes a meaningful sacrifice. A sacrifice that is freely offered to God has more value than one which is undertaken by rule of law. The traditional law of fasting, applicable to all those who had reached their twenty-first birthday and had not yet reached their sixtieth, was to fast on all the weekdays of Lententide to noon on Holy Saturday. The law of abstinence, which applied to all those who had reached their seventh birthday and which ended only with death, was to abstain from meat entirely on Ash Wednesday, the Lenten Fridays, and Holy Saturday all day long; and to observe partial abstinence from meat on other days in Lent. There was never any fasting or abstinence on the Sundays of Lententide and, in fact, that is forbidden. The custom here in Canada, in addition, was to observe complete abstinence on all the Wednesdays of Lent and on ember Saturday in Lent. Just do it! Nobody can stop you because we are always allowed to do more than what is required.

Lent is divided into two main periods; namely, Quadragesima and the 'great fortnight' known as Passiontide. Quadragesima begins on Ash Wednesday and extends to the Saturday preceding Passion Sunday. It concentrates especially on our own sinfulness; Passiontide, on the Passion of Jesus Christ for our redemption. Passiontide, in turn, is divided into two weeks, known as Passion Week and Holy Week. The days of Passion Week are called Passion Sunday, Passion Monday, Passion Tuesday, etcetera. Those in Holy Week are called Palm Sunday, Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, Spy Wednesday (Irish usage especially), Maundy Thursday (called also 'Holy Thursday' but this should be avoided), Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Good Friday was once called 'Black Friday'. It is completely wrong to call Palm Sunday 'Passion Sunday'. Passion Sunday is the Sunday preceding Palm Sunday.

The last three days in Holy Week are called the Sacred Triduum. They are not to be called the 'Easter Triduum' as the ignoramuses call it in various places. The Easter Triduum is the

first three days of Easter; it is Easter Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. The Sacred Triduum is Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. These two distinct tridua overlap and are joined and bound together by Easter Sunday, the most important day of the year.

Rosary Devotions: There is a pious custom to pray the Sorrowful Mysteries every day in Lententide, whether, on a particular day, one prays all Fifteen Mysteries or not. So, for those of us who pray one chaplet (five mysteries) each day, the custom is to pray only the Sorrowful Mysteries in Lententide. In the Easter Triduum, one prays the Glorious Mysteries (and also on the Wednesday in Easter week because it is a Wednesday). Then one returns to the alternation of mysteries. Of course, some brave souls pray all Fifteen Mysteries each day. I salute such people but I'm not one of them: I prefer to pray other devotions rather than all Fifteen Mysteries each day. I only do that on Sundays. The praying of Sorrowful Mysteries will begin this Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday, because it is a Tuesday. Then it will continue each day to and including Holy Saturday.

Lenten Mortifications: Among common and accepted mortifications are 'watchings' (sleep deprivation), the discipline (a short whip), the hairshirt, the cilice (penance bracelet), long prayers and extra devotions, and there are many others. To each his own but nobody should practise a severe mortification except under the supervision of a good Catholic doctor. I warn people, in particular, to avoid the Clock of the Passion devotion unless one knows what one is doing. It can cause faithful complete exhaustion. It means saying a short prayer every hour on the hour from Vespers (6.00 p.m.) on Maundy Thursday to Vespers on Good Friday (and some follow it also on Passion Thursday and Passion Friday). It's definitely not for everyone, especially older people. The same can be said of the Black Fast, which was never mandatory. It is a fast on only bread, water and herbs, traditionally undertaken from sunrise to sunset on Good Friday

and, for some, on Passion Friday as well (*i.e.* the previous Friday). Some would undertake it on other days--even on all the days of Lent. Such practices are meant for those who are given the graces to bear them and not just for everyone. One should also be spiritually adept to practise such sacrifices.

Devotions especially recommended in Lent are the Stations of the Cross, the Psalter and Chaplet of the Five Sacred Wounds, the Little Offices of the Passion, of the Holy Cross and of the Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Beads of the Crown of Thorns, and recitation of the Seven Penitential Psalms plus Psalm 69 and following established prayers. One should attend Tenebræ if possible in Holy Week. This year, our friends in the Ordinariate will offer Mattins and Lauds of Maundy Thursday on the morning of Spy Wednesday. The custom is to anticipate to the previous morning the Mattins and Lauds of each day in the Sacred Triduum. So that of Maundy Thursday is chanted on the morning of Spy Wednesday; that of Good Friday, on the morning of Maundy Thursday; and that of Holy Saturday, on the morning of Good Friday.

For those who can manage it, it is pious to pray the Stations of the Cross every day in Lent. One can only gain the indulgence if this be done in church but it can be done to great profit otherwise at home. At our church, the Stations will be prayed publicly and led by Father on Fridays to and including Passion Friday. They will not be prayed publicly on Good Friday.

We were able to have the proper sparse display of violet or purple flowers on the Altar today for Shrove Sunday. They may stay up until Ash Wednesday, when all flowers are forbidden except on Lætare Sunday and Masses of allowed feasts (especially on the Feasts of the Annunciation and St. Joseph). The organ will not be played in Lent except to support the chant. After the Alleluia on Maundy Thursday, even that is customarily excluded and a tuning fork is used to intone the chant. But that will not apply to us! One day, one day, we may be able to have all the Holy Week offices and rituals in our church. It's something to pray on.

P.K.P.