

# **CELEBRATE LENT**

**Ash Wednesday**

**Want to find serenity?**

**Have no anxiety over imperfections and shortfalls.**

Today, we begin the season of Lent. It is time to check on our spiritual health. Lent is a call to walk with Jesus - even pick up the cross - and make it to Jerusalem! It is journey from ashes to fire – from death to resurrection and new life.

Traditionally, Christians all over the world have used the disciplines of **Prayer, Penance and Almsgiving** as pathways of Lenten Spirituality. They still are wonderful and life-giving disciplines. They bring us closer to God and to God's people. **Prayer** strengthens our connection to God. **Penance** builds our character and helps us get rid of unhealthy habits which weaken our ability to love God, others and ourselves. **Almsgiving** helps to care for others - to reach out to the less fortunate, the unfortunate, the disadvantaged, the poor, the marginalized and suffering people in our community.

**Joel 2:12-18:**

Even now, say the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting and mourning.

**Psalm 51: Create in me a clean heart, Oh God**

Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;  
In your abundant compassion, blot out my offense.  
Wash away all my guilt;  
From my sin, cleanse me.

**2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2**

We implore you, in Christ's name: Be reconciled to God

**Mathew 6:1-6, 16-18**

Keep your deeds of mercy secret and your father who sees in secret will repay you.

**Prayerfully Reflect:**

**Now is the acceptable time, the season for conversion, change and transformation!**

Joel proclaims an URGENCY: It is time to sanctify the community.

Paul urges (begs) on behalf of Christ; be reconciled to God.

Jesus urges: purify your motivations; your intentions. It's all about being called again to conversion, holiness, perfection, purification, sanctification, transformation.

**This is the fast that pleases me: releasing those bound unjustly,  
setting the oppressed free  
sharing your bread with the hungry  
(Isaiah 58)**

### **Saint of the Day, February 18 - St. Simon or Symeon of Jerusalem and 16 other saints are remembered this day**

According to tradition, the first bishop of Jerusalem was James, son of Zebedee, appointed bishop by the Apostles Peter. Simeon of Jerusalem was selected as James' successor after the conquest of Jerusalem. According to tradition, after the martyrdom of James and the conquest of Jerusalem which immediately followed, those apostles and disciples who were still living came together from all directions to discern who was worthy to succeed James. They, unanimously proclaimed Symeon, the son of Clopas, as the worthy person to succeed James. He was a cousin of Jesus, Clopas being a brother of Joseph. He is also one of those mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as having received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

In the year 66, civil war broke out in Palestine, as a consequence of Jewish opposition to the Romans. The Christians in Jerusalem were warned of the impending destruction of the city and ordered to leave it. Accordingly, that same year, they retired with St. Simeon at their head to the other side of the Jordan, occupying a small city called Pella. After the capture and burning of Jerusalem, the Christians returned and settled among the ruins until the Emperor Hadrian afterwards entirely razed it.

However, the church here flourished greatly, and many Jews were converted by the miracles wrought by the saints. When Vespasian and Domitian had ordered the destruction of all who were of the race of David, St. Simeon had escaped their search; but when Trajan gave a similar injunction, he was denounced as being not only one of David's descendants, but also a Christian, and he was brought before Atticus, the Roman governor. He was condemned to death and, after being tortured, was crucified around the year 107 C.E. According to tradition, he was extremely old, around 120.

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