

Lent – Our Springtime of Faith

I *will* get to the step-by-step explanation of the individual parts and actions of the Mass, but on this first Sunday of Lent, I want to say at least something about the Season. The simplest description of Lent would identify it as the time in which we prepare for the celebration of Easter. As such, Lent has a double character, namely to prepare those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil, and to prepare those already baptized to renew our baptismal promises at the Easter liturgy. The extra spiritual disciplines we carry out during Lent are meant to serve this preparation. The Word “Lent” itself is the English equivalent of the German word *lenz* which simply means *spring*, which derives from the German word for “long”, which refers to how the days visibly lengthen in Spring. As with Christmas which celebrates the return of light to the world right after the darkest night of the year, the placement of Easter in Spring, when life returns anew to the Earth, works symbolically only in the Northern Hemisphere. For Christians in the Southern Hemisphere, the observance of Lent/Spring takes place when it is actually Autumn around them. This is a good example of how many of our religious practices have their roots and origins in Western Europe, and are quite culturally and geographically conditioned. But the season around us during Lent is far less important than the season within us. So, whether we are leaving Winter and entering Spring as {we *hope* we do soon!} here in the North, or leaving Summer and entering Autumn as in the South, what matters most is our interior climate of openness, and a desire for a change of heart so we can become more free and faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.
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