

# The Lily Pad



**“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.”**

Solomon 2:1



## *Why Lent?*

Dear Members and Friends,

Millions of Christians gathered in churches around the world on Ash Wednesday, February 26, 2020, to have their forehead marked with an ashy cross as they heard either the words, “Repent, and believe the gospel!” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Every year when Ash Wednesday comes around I think back to past Lents—to what I “gave up” and what God gave me. It’s an anniversary of transforming love, a grace: something substantial that God has set in place to remind us he’s there. I like a good challenge. Lent is God throwing us a challenge, and it’s a really good one. Of course, we’ll might fail at our resolutions or want to give up. But that’s the whole point of the challenge: Repent, and believe the gospel!

Ash Wednesday commences a 46-day (40 days excluding Sundays) period of prayer, fasting, and preparation known as Lent in preparation for Easter that has been celebrated since the days of the early church (with recorded discussions of Lent as early as the third century; the Ash Wednesday tradition began in the eighth century).

But as with all good church traditions, Lent exists not simply to occupy our time or give us something to do, but for our benefit. The bottom line is this: *we are about to reflect on the most important week in human history, so we prepare.*

We are about to ponder the death of our Lord for our sins. During Lent we follow the journey that Christ makes as he ends His public ministry and turns towards Jerusalem, towards the cross. In Lent we examine ourselves, recognizing that the reason Jesus must make this journey, the reason he must be mocked, the reason he must suffer, and the reason he must die is your sin and mine. We mourn the fact that our sins caused such grief and pain for our Lord. We rejoice that out of His great love for us He bore the burden and punishment for our sins. In light of what Christ has done, we devote ourselves anew to the never-ending task of purging our lives of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lent is a “penitential (repent) season”, a time of preparation and fasting. While we have no Biblical command to fast during Lent, fasting can be a helpful tool for reflection and spiritual growth. Oftentimes Christians choose to “give something up” in an effort to deprive their bodies and reflect on their own sins, as well as the work of Christ to deal with those sins. Perhaps more effective is fasting that leaves you time for prayer and the reading of Scripture, such as refraining from television or another activity. We are free in the Gospel to fast or not to fast during Lent, but the practice is certainly worth considering.

The entire church does fast during Lent. We fast from the word “Alleluia” in our worship services. “Alleluia” means “praise Yahweh”, or “praise the Lord”. This is done with a purpose. In Lent we spend time reflecting on our sins and what Christ did on the cross. This is a somber thing to consider. God the Father allowed His Son to die for your sins. But in addition to the less joyful tone provided by the absence of Alleluia during Lent, it also intensifies the joy of Easter Sunday.

“From dust you were taken and to dust you will return.” It is a somber moment in a very somber service. It is also very sobering to consider that not only were we taken from dust (by God in Creation), but that we will also return to dust upon our death (by man’s original sin in the Garden of Eden). It is one of those rare moments in a church service when a not-so-pleasant reality hits – I am going to die. Everything I have done in my body will turn to dust. Everything I have worked so hard for in my life will turn to dust. My relationships, my friendships will end. Any riches I’ve gained will be gone. Not only will everything in my life turn to dust, but even my own body, the body I was born with, the body I rode a bike in, this body that has borne children, and played sports, the body that even causes me aches and pains, this body, is going to turn to dust.

Ash Wednesday sets a very serious tone for Lent. Ash Wednesday sets up the very serious realities we face every day – we are going to die. But Lent doesn’t bring this realization to our mind so that we can sit around and sulk in depression. Because just as quickly as we can realize that we are utterly hopeless and helpless on our own, God come and speak to you saying, “Yes, you are without hope by yourself. And you are truly dead by yourself. But you are not by yourself. I am your Lord, I am your God, and I am very good at making things out of dust. I did it in the beginning, and I will do it again in the final resurrection and, through my Son Jesus, I have already made you brand new.”

It is good for us to remember during Lent, and all through the church year, that we are just dust and ashes. But as quickly as we remember this, we should also remember that through the resurrection of Jesus on Easter morning, God the Father declared that we are so much more than just ashes. You are forgiven, you are alive, your death is dead and we have a new life in Christ that not even death can ever destroy

We can’t go back and experience that joy of the first Easter the way the disciples did. We know going in that Jesus isn’t going to stay dead! But our Lenten fast from this word allows us to appreciate that joy as we hear the chorus “Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!” on Easter Sunday.

On behalf of Brother Martin, and our young adults, Marissa, Biancha, Sophia, Nicolas and our furry girls, Cookie, Hachi and Sadie, I would like to say how grateful and blessed we are to journey with each of you this season of Lent; this special time of prayer, penance, sacrifice and good works in preparation of the celebration of Easter, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ who has declared that all of us are so much more than just ashes, we are His reborn and remade children, crafted together in the likeness of His own Son.

May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you with repentant hearts  
as we plan to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus  
and won your salvation on Easter Morning.

The Lord be with you,

*Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martín*

### **2020 Women’s History Month**

*The 2020 Women’s History Month theme celebrates the women who have fought for woman’s right to vote in the United States. In recognition of the centennial of the 19th Amendment, women from the original suffrage movement as well as 20th and 21st century women who have continued the struggle (fighting against poll taxes, literacy tests, voter roll purges, and other more contemporary forms of voter suppression) to ensure voting rights for all will be honored.*

