

## Lent Preparation

*“To make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.”  
Ash Wednesday – 6<sup>th</sup> of March*

The Christian life is a pilgrimage, a journey beginning with our baptism—during the course of which we will be “buried with Christ in his death” and yet will come to “share in his resurrection.” This is not just something hoped for when our earthly life is ended; it is to be the very shape and form of each day we live as a child of God.

The spiritual journey of Lent beginning with Ash Wednesday is a pilgrimage toward the darkness of Good Friday, when the death of the Light of the World is symbolized in the Gospels as darkness over the whole land from noon to three in the afternoon. The Word is silenced. Christ’s life is extinguished and placed, with *supposed* finality, into a tomb.

Thus our worship in Lent gradually removes from our eyes and our ears the symbols of the Word Incarnate and the Light of the World. Christian mystics have described the spiritual journey into the mystery of the cross as a pilgrimage into “the dark night of the soul.” It is to face “the death of God,” the absence of the Divine in all the forms we have come to know and expect. It is to journey into “the cloud of unknowing”, that place where one no longer hears God, no longer sees God manifest, no longer feels God’s presence, but is called to trust in God by faith alone.

The rich traditions found in our Book of Common Prayer “prepare the way” for our spiritual journeys with Christ. And in Lent, we ‘walk the way’ towards the cross with our beloved brother, Jesus. Our liturgy (the work of the people), our prayers, our music and symbols of worship will be dramatically different beginning on Ash Wednesday, so that we can tell this story in multiple languages. Many volunteers and staff have already been preparing for this time of our Lenten journey together.

On first glance as you enter the sanctuary on Ash Wednesday and the entire season of Lent and Holy Week you will be encountered by a space that is sparse, yet not nearly as sparse as the desert Jesus will be immersed in for 40 days.

- All brass candle holders will be replaced by simple pottery
- Patens and chalices made of pottery will be used at each service
- The candelabras will be removed along with the brass Sanctus bell
- Simple linens will cover both the large and small altars
- Purple cloth will adorn both our processional cross and large elevated cross
- The choir, altar party and clergy will process and recess in silence
- We will return to Eucharistic Prayer A and the traditional Lord’s Prayer
- Services will begin with the Penitential Order, with the use of the Decalogue the first, third and fifth Sundays in Lent
- Curly willows in brown containers replace our exquisite flower arrangements
- We are adding an additional service this year, The Great Vigil of Easter (BCP pg. 285); this will take place the Saturday night before Resurrection Sunday

Our Lenten pilgrimage is a journey of those who “walk as yet by faith” alone. It is a journey toward Love, toward Life so strong that even the powers of death cannot defeat it.

*NLJ+*