

Lent begins Ash Wednesday

Lent, the 40-day period of preparation for Easter, begins Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14. While not a holy day of obligation, Catholics are encouraged to attend Mass that day as a way of beginning their Lenten journey in prayer.

Archbishop William E. Lori will celebrate Ash Wednesday Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore at 12:10 p.m. and the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland at 5:30 p.m.

Bishop Adam J. Parker noted that the season of Lent allows Catholics to focus on any obstacles preventing a full devotion to the faith, and that the sacrament of reconciliation helps to remove those obstacles. Many parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore will be participating in a special “Day of Reconciliation” March 19, when the sacrament of reconciliation will be made available all day. (Click **here** for a schedule.)

“We realize that this sacrament cleanses us of our sins,” Bishop Parker said, “which allows us to grow in our relationship with the Lord.”

During Lent, the faithful are asked to give themselves to prayer and the reading of the Scripture, to fast and give alms.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onward. Although Valentine’s Day falls on Ash Wednesday this year, there is no dispensation for eating meat or refraining from fasting in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Catholics are also encouraged to “give up” something for Lent as a special sacrifice or to do something such as volunteering for a charity or saying extra prayers this

season.

“Whatever Lenten disciplines that one might choose should help bring us closer to the Lord,” Bishop Parker said. “Whatever it is, it’s got to be centered on Christ and our relationship with him.”



LENTEN RESOURCES