

A Word from Pastor John

If you didn't already realize it, the word for this week is Lent. For most of us, we know that it is part of the church season leading up to Holy Week and Easter, and we've heard that it often involves "giving up" something or other. We may not really be sure why.

Lent comes from an old word in English meaning, "lengthen" and was applied during the Spring when the hours of sunlight begin to stretch out longer. Since Easter falls during this season, the Church borrowed the name and the idea and developed a season of penitence and preparation -- lengthening the time -- to prepare for Easter. The first people to participate in Lent were new converts to Christianity, who traditionally were baptized on Easter morning. 40 days was selected as a time period, based on Jesus' experience in the wilderness, being tried for 40 days. As the lenten practice expanded to all of the faithful in the Church, it was noted that Sundays should be excluded from the penitential actions since every Sunday was considered a feast day -- a celebration!

So, that's how we got the "odd" definition of Lent as a 40-day period of time, not counting Sundays. It actually adds up to 7 weeks or so (6 days per week, except Lent begins on a Wednesday with ashes and repentance) so around 42 days, give or take. Got that?

In order to help us mark the time, I have begun producing a daily devotion on YouTube and Facebook that simply says, "Bless This Lent Day 1" and Day 2, and Day 3 and so on. No need to worry about which date is what -- you are encouraged to simply find the devotional for the day you desire and give it a listen. They are about 5-6 minutes long and are taken from a study guide written by Kate Bowler, a minister, author, and professor at Duke Divinity School entitled "Bless the Lent We Actually Have."