



St. Benedict's

An Ordinariate Mission in Edmonton



THE EMBER DAYS

St. Benedict Ordariate

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“On rogation and ember days the practice of the Church is to offer prayers to the Lord for the needs of all people, especially for the productivity of the earth and for human labour, and to make public thanksgiving. In order to adapt the rogation and ember days to various regions and the different needs of the faithful, the conferences of bishops should arrange the time and plan of their celebration. Consequently, the competent authority should lay down norms, in view of local conditions, on extending such celebrations over one or several days and on repeating them during the year. On each day of these celebrations the Mass should be one of the votive Masses for various needs and occasions that is best suited to the intentions of the petitioners.”

General Norms for the Liturgical Year Calendar, Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI, Paenitemini, 1966

WHAT ARE EMBER DAYS?

& what is their role in the life of the Ordinariate?

The Ember days are four seasonal times of prayer and fasting, and an ancient part of the Ordinariate's English Catholic patrimony. The word comes from "Quattember" or "the four times of the year" as the Ember days take place in Advent, Lent, Whitsuntide (the octave of Pentecost), and September following Holy Cross Day.

The Catholic Church invites us to fast and pray for the Lord Jesus to send new vocations to ministry in His holy Church, and for Christians to take up bravely their vocations in the world.

In the Latin Church, the minimal fasting guidelines for persons between 18 - 59 are one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together would not equal a full meal. All persons who fast are asked to maintain their health, particularly if they choose to make a more demanding fast.

Unless health reasons determine otherwise, all Catholics in the Ordinariate ages 14 and up are required to abstain from meat on Ember Friday in Lent.

Source: <https://acsociety.org/news/ember-days-are-here-again-time-to-fast-pray-for-christian-vocations>



HISTORICAL ORIGINS

At first, the Church in Rome had fasts in June, September, and December. The Liber Pontificalis ascribes to Pope Callixtus I (217–222) a law regulating the fast, although Leo the Great (440–461) considers it an Apostolic institution. When the fourth season was added cannot be ascertained, but Pope Gelasius I (492–496) speaks of all four... The Christian observance of the seasonal Ember days had its origin as an ecclesiastical ordinance in Rome, and spread from there to the rest of the Western Church. They were known as the jejunium vernum, aestivum, autumnale and hiernale, so that, to quote Pope Leo's words (A.D. 440 - 461) the law of abstinence might apply to every season of the year...

Their observance in Britain... was embraced earlier than in Gaul [modern France] or Spain, and Christian sources connect the Ember Days observance with Augustine of Canterbury, AD. 597, said to be acting under the direct authority of Pope Gregory the Great... [in contrast,] Spain adopted them with the Roman rite in the eleventh century."

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ember_days



SEASONS OF PENANCE, SEASONS OF THANKSGIVING

The fasting and abstinence on Wednesday is observed in memory of Judas' betrayal; Friday is in memory of the crucifixion; Saturday is in memory of the tomb.

- The individual feast days aren't involved with the penance; they're just reminders of when the Ember Days fall (although two of the feast days are penitential in themselves).
- The winter Ember Days [traditionally] follow[ed] St. Lucy's Day (December 13th) and are offered in thanksgiving for the olive harvest, which gives us holy oils. [Note: In the Ordinariate, the winter Ember Days have been moved to the first week of Advent; see 'Addendum' below.]
- The spring Ember Days follow Ash Wednesday (movable, forty-six days before Easter) and are offered in thanksgiving for the flowers, which feed the bees, who make the wax that gives us the altar candles.

- The summer Ember Days follow Pentecost (movable, the eighth Sunday after Easter) and are offered in thanksgiving for the wheat harvest, which gives us the Eucharist.
- The fall Ember Days follow the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th) and are offered in thanksgiving for the grape harvest, which gives us the Precious Blood.
- If the feast day falls on a Wednesday, the Ember Days begin on the following Wednesday.
- The penance is traditionally fasting on Wednesday and Saturday, and fasting and abstinence from meat on Friday.
- Current fasting norms permit one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.
- Until 1966, the Ember Days were a required observation for all Catholics (except for those exempt for reasons of age or health).

Graphic and Source: <https://catholicallyear.com/blog/ember-days-in-case-you-were-starting-to/>

ADDENDUM:

The fall and winter Ember Days in the Ordinariate may differ from those proscribed by the 1962 calendar. The September Ember days are always from the Wednesday after Holy Cross Day, which may vary from the 1962 calendar as the method for calculating the Ember days was not always based on Holy Cross. The Advent Ember days in the Ordinariate Missal have been moved from the traditional days after St. Lucy's feast (December 13th) to the first week of Advent. The reason for this is said to be to let the last days of Advent from December 17th to 24th be left alone to retain their special nature.

Source: <https://theacolystoolbox.wordpress.com/2020/11/28/the-construction-of-the-ordinariate-calendar/>