

Father Bernie Lindley

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Church

This is Father Bernie Lindley from St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, for Voices.

Ash Wednesday this year is on Valentine's Day. It seems a bit weird that on a day of couple's romance we will be getting ashes on our foreheads and told to remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return—which doesn't really seem very romantic.

I'm thinking we should start planning now to have your romantic dinners on Tuesday, which is Mardi Gras, so that the whole ashes thing won't ruin the cupid thing. At St. Timothy's we will be having a Mardi Gras pancake dinner. We call it Shrove Tuesday. It is the last formal celebration before the start of the penitential season of Lent. Lent is a period of introspection as Christians prepare for the miracle of Easter. Lent is often observed through some practice of self-denial. For instance, some people might give up a certain food that isn't partially healthy, or they might give up alcohol, or they might abstain from using curse words or other bad habit as a way to grow closer to God. Other options might be to add a spiritual discipline during the season of Lent. Examples would be to start reading a daily devotional, or read a portion of the Bible, or maybe add a half hour of meditation each day.

Lent gives Christians a chance to try something new in their lives for a short period of time. It gives us a chance to grow spiritually and grow in our relationship with God. If done right, it is 46 days of spiritual exploration that leads through Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and ends with Jesus rising from the dead.

The more time we put into pondering our personal shortcomings, the more time we spend considering our need for God in our lives, the more powerful the celebration of Easter will be.