

Questions about Lent

Where do the ashes come from that are used on Ash Wednesday?

The palms from the previous Palm Sunday are burned (sometime on Shrove Tuesday or the Sunday before Lent begins) and they provide the ashes for Ash Wednesday. We at Saint David's have an abundance of ashes from previous years, so we haven't burned any palm in quite a while. A little ash goes a long way!

What is the tradition behind Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper?

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper is the traditional English version of Mardi Gras, but -- typically English -- without all the fun and festivities! The idea of making pancakes, so I've been told, was to use up all the eggs, butter, and bacon (the most common "meat" for ordinary people) before Lent began since these food items were considered to be "luxuries" and traditionally "given up" during Lent -- or at least for a period of time or on certain days, like Fridays, during Lent. Chickens are not very religious; they keep on laying eggs no matter what the season!

My guess is that all of this practice and tradition comes from the late medieval period and it's interesting how the traditions have survived even though the world has changed drastically. Another interesting Lent/Easter custom we all do: the coloring and decorating of Easter eggs comes from the Eastern Orthodox traditions. Eggs and other "goodies" given up for Lent were festively decorated and brought to church in baskets on Easter day to be blessed by the priest.

Why didn't we have a Pancake Supper at Saint David's this year?

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper is very popular in Episcopal Churches, and the reason we did not have one here this year is not because of lack of interest, but simply because Lent came up on us so quickly that we (I) didn't have time to prepare for it. Lots of people were asking about it. My bad! We will be sure to do it next year!