

Lenten Season in Fiji Islands

by: Samuel Deo, President, Fiji Catholic Community in the USA
Subcommittee Adviser for the Fijian Ministry in the USA



Fiji is a predominantly Christian country with Methodist, Catholics, and other denominations making up sixty four percent of the population.

The Lenten season is considered a very special and sacred time for most Christians. In fact, the Easter weekend is such a wonderful time of prayer and church activities that the Fijian government has declared Easter Monday as a public holiday. Both Christians and other ethnic groups look forward to this time of the year.

As in most countries, the Lenten season starts with Ash Wednesday. Stations of the Cross are held on Fridays in all parishes throughout Fiji during Lent. Everyone makes efforts to make sacrifices during Lent and collect monies from their sacrifices to give towards charity during Easter. Each parish in Fiji is divided into small prayer groups and weekly prayer meetings are very common. This also gives people a chance to reflect deeper into their faith and a chance to have choir rehearsals, drama practices, and other plans for the Easter weekend.

Palm Sunday is celebrated in a big way – all parishes have processions starting from a designated area and ending at the parish. Big displays of palms are seen and most processions go through public roads as a demonstration of the Catholic faith.

On Holy Thursday, representatives' feet are washed by the priests during Mass and an all-night vigil follows in a location outside of the church. In most cases, parish halls are

used and small prayer groups from the parish take turns to pray and sing hymns throughout the night.

On Good Friday, there is a Way of the Cross for several miles and the Stations of the Cross prayers are recited. Young people in many parishes try to dramatize the Stations. There are fourteen stops along the way and the procession ends in the church. People return to the parish at 3:00 pm for the Veneration of the Cross.

The Easter Vigil service begins at 8:00 pm on Saturday night and goes on until midnight in most parishes. Easter Sunday is celebrated in a big way and families, friends, and small prayer groups gather for a feast and rejoice in the Risen Lord.

The Fiji Catholic community in the U.S. is widely scattered, so we follow the programs of the parishes we belong to, but whenever possible, families and small groups get together to have a feast on Easter Sunday.