

EMBER DAYS

From the earliest days, the Church has had an option of celebrating Ember Days four times a year. The timing coincides with the changing of seasons and the changing liturgical cycles. The Ember Days are a perfect example of how the Church has looked at the culture and tried to sanctify any practices which could be utilized for a good purpose. In this case, the Church saw a Roman practice that was praiseworthy and simply transferred the prayers to the true God of Christianity. We use these days, then, to thank God for the gifts He gives us in nature, teaches us to make use of them in moderation, and is an opportunity to assist the needy. Some have likened them to “mini-lent” days when we make a conscious effort to grow closer to God and accept the invitation to become what He has created us to be. Ember Days, then, are days of prayer, fasting and action.

The next Ember Days come September 22, 24, 25 and happen at a time of turning. The leaves are beginning to turn from green to red and orange, The birds are beginning to turn and are heading once more toward the south. The animals are beginning to turn to storing their food for the winter. For leaves, birds, and animals, turning comes instinctively. For us, turning does not come so easily. It takes an act of will for us to make a turn. It means breaking old habits. It is an opportunity. As we slowly and carefully come out of a very trying time, it can be a real time of turning for us. Many of us are turning to new jobs, changing our location, reconnecting with friends and family, or simply recognizing what is truly important in our lives. We come together in faith and hope in the celebration of the Eucharist to open our hearts to God to help us to turn. As a pastorate the parishes of St. John and St. Joseph will offer the opportunity to celebrate the coming Ember Days. There will be events of prayer, of gathering, of celebrating in our homes with family and others, and a time of learning.

Let us together pray...

Lord, help us to turn, from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to faith. Turn us around, Lord, and bring us back toward you. Revive our lives as at the beginning and turn us toward each other, Lord, for in isolation there is no life. Amen