

Season began on the Wednesday of the 7th week before Easter. This is called Ash Wednesday today and the date of the celebration was set by Gregory I. From this time until Easter there was a period of fasting and meditation called Lent. During this time pilgrimages were undertaken, special acts of devotion were performed, and the various items were set aside for the spiritual fulfillment of the people. However the pre-easter season began six weeks before this. During this time there was feasting and rejoicing and it eventually became a time of carnival which today is marked by the Mardi Gras. It came to be that one would have a riotous time for six weeks and then when Lent came, one would know what to give up.

Palm Sunday, commemorating the triumphal entry to Jerusalem, marked the beginning of Passion Week. It became a favorite time for baptisms, giving of pledges, taking public vows, etc. From the preceding Saturday an eight day cycle (the Octave) celebrated every move of the Lord in Passion Week. Special services were conducted daily and the faithful were revived. Friday was considered the traditional day of crucifixion and Sunday marked the resurrection completeness.

With the early and later tradition, a host of material developed about the occasion that almost ruined its true significance. If you, at this point, wonder how the simplicity that defined biblical Christianity could become so complex, then ask yourself why our choirs wear robes, why some churches use baptismal gowns and most all of us have a printed program for an order of service and worship! You may or may not appreciate these things but they are all part of the liturgical structure. Those of us who think we are non-liturgical are generally not nearly so pure as we think.

CHRISTMAS!

The term literally describes the "mass of the Christ" a service commemorating the birth of the Lord and His subsequent childhood. It does not have the liturgical foundation that Easter has in the apostolic age but it came to be widely recognized in the west after 360 AD. Tradition soon catches up with it.

The dates come from sketchy reckonings of some of the