

4...The man is composed of four elements touching the body, and of three virtues or powers in his soul: i.e., wit, understanding, the will and the mind.

5...As John Damascene said: in March the blood growth and augmented, and in summer cooler, in September melancholy and in winter phlegm.

6...For the printemps is likened to the air, the summer to fire, harvest to the earth, and the winter to water.

7...March is reported to infancy, summer to youth, September to steadfast age and virtuous, and winter to old age.

8...We fast four times a year to make amends for all that we have failed in all these four times, and they be done in three days each time, to the end that we satisfy in one day that which we have failed in a month; and that which is the fourth day, that is Wednesday, is the day in which our Lord was betrayed by Judas; and Friday because our lord was crucified; and Saturday because he lay in the sepulcher.

*In addition to the penitential fasting and alms—giving, it is good to consider our stewardship of the earth, a responsibility God gave to us in the garden of Eden, as recorded in Genesis 1:28-30.*

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:**

All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven.

A time to be born and a time to die.

A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.

A time to kill, and a time to heal.

A time to destroy, and a time to build.

A time to weep, and a time to laugh.

A time to mourn, and a time to dance.

A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather.

A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.

A time to get, and a time to lose.

A time to keep, and a time to cast away.

A time to rend, and a time to sew.

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

A time of war, and a time of peace.

\*(excerpted from: [www.fisheaters.com](http://www.fisheaters.com))

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**Ember Days**

SPRING SUMMER

WINTER AUTUMN

**EMBER DAYS**

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to make amends for all that we have failed  
in all these four times...  
and they be done in three days each time...  
Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

## Ember Days

\*Four times a year, the Church sets aside three days to focus on God through His marvelous creation. These quarterly periods take place around the beginning of the four natural seasons that "like some virgins dancing in a circle, succeed one another with the happiest harmony," as St. John Chrysostom wrote. These four times are kept on a successive Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday and are known as "Ember Days," or *Quatuor Tempora*, in Latin. The first of these four times comes in Winter, after the Feast of St. Lucy; the second comes in Spring, the week after Ash Wednesday; the third comes in Summer, after Pentecost Sunday; and the last comes in Autumn, after Holy Cross Day. Their dates can be remembered by this old mnemonic: *Sant Crux, Lucia, Cineres, Charismata Dia Ut sit in angaria quarta sequens feria*. Which means: Holy Cross, Lucy, Ash Wednesday, Pentecost, are when the quarter holidays follow. For non—Latinists, it might be easier to just remember "Lucy, Ashes, Dove, and Cross.

These times are spent fasting and partially abstaining (voluntary since the new Code of Canon Law) in penance and with the intentions of thanking God for the gifts He gives us in nature and beseeching Him for the discipline to use them in moderation. The fasts, known as "*Jejunia quatuor temporum*," or "the fast of the four seasons," are rooted in Old Testament practices of fasting four times a year (Zacharias 8:19).

Our Israelite ancestors once fasted weekly on Tuesday and Thursday, but Christians changed the fast days to Wednesday (the day on which Christ was betrayed) and Friday (the day on which He was crucified). The weekly two day fasts were later amended in the Roman Church to keep only Fridays as penitential days, but during Embertide, the older, two—day fasts are restored. Saturdays (the day

He was entombed) were added to these ember times of fasting and are seen as a sort of culmination of the Ember Days.

The Dominican, blessed Jacopo de Voragine (A.D. 1230-1298), archbishop of Genoa, wrote a collection of the stories of the Saints known as "*Legenda Aurea*" (Golden Legend). This work gives eight quite interesting reasons to fast during Ember Days and they have been ordained by Pope Calixtus:

**1**...A. For the first time, which is March, is hot and moist; B. the second in summer is hot and dry; C. in harvest, is cold and dry; D. The fourth in winter is cold and moist; E. Then let us fast in March which is printemps (spring) for to repress the heat of the flesh boiling, and to quench luxury or to temper it; F. In summer we ought to fast to the end that we chastise the burning and ardour of avarice; G. In harvest for to repress the drought of pride; and H. In winter for to chastise the coldness of untruth and of malice.

**2**...The second reason why we fast four times; for these fasting here begin in March in the first week of Lent, to the end that vices wax dry in us, for they may not all be quenched; or because that we cast them away...In summer for the coming of the Holy Ghost...In September because that is the time the fruits are gathered...In December for this is the time herbs die, and we ought to be mortified to the world.

**3**...to ensue (follow) the Jews. For the Jews fasted four times in the year: A..tofore (before) Easter...B.. tofore Whitsunside (Pentecost)...C.. tofore the setting of the tabernacle in the temple...D.. tofore the dedication of the temple in December.