

## **Ember Days:**

The Ember Days comprise the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of the week following the first Sunday in Lent; the week between Pentecost and Trinity Sunday; the week following the Feast of the Holy Cross (September 14); and the week following the Commemoration of St. Lucia (December 13).

Traditionally, the Western Church observed four periods, roughly one for each of the natural seasons of the year, seeking God's blessings upon the fruits of the earth and acknowledging that all food comes from Him. Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving as prescribed by the Church marked the three days of each Embertide.

In the Church of the Reformation, these days marked a season of piety especially devoted to preaching on the catechism. Today the Ember Days can be a time to give special attention to the elements and fundamentals of Christian knowledge and life found in the catechism.

The Ember Days were originally days of prayer, repentance, and fasting. After the Reformation, the Ember Days themselves became for Lutherans one of the roots of the evangelical "days of repentance." The traditional themes of repentance can be used in one's daily prayer in a way that is already familiar, as a Day of Supplication and Prayer. (Propers appointed for a Day of Supplication and Prayer can be found in Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book, p. 992.) Hymns of confession and absolution would be suitable. The appointed lectio continua readings of daily prayer are retained. In prayers, it would be fitting of the days to ask to be forgiven of guilt to be spared from punishment (war and other distresses), and to pray the Collect for Peace (Vespers, p. O-15).

**Blessed Is Everyone Who Fears the LORD**

<sup>1</sup>Blessèd is everyone who | fears the LORD,\*  
who walks | in his ways!

<sup>2</sup>You shall eat the fruit of the labor | of your hands;\*  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be | well with you.

<sup>3</sup>Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
with- | in your house;\*  
your children will be like olive shoots  
around your | table.

<sup>4</sup>Behold, thus shall the | man be blessed\*  
who | fears the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD bless you from | Zion!\*  
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
all the days | of your life!

<sup>6</sup>May you see your children's | children!\*  
Peace be upon | Israel!

**Reading***Exodus 20:1–17***The Ten Commandments**

<sup>1</sup>And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup>"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>3</sup>"You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup>"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

<sup>8</sup>"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you

shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

<sup>12</sup>“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>“You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>“You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>“You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup>“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

## Reading

*Matthew 12:46–50*

### Jesus’ Mother and Brothers

<sup>46</sup>While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. <sup>48</sup>But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” <sup>49</sup>And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup>For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

## Acknowledgments

Evening Prayer from Lutheran Service Book

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