



Why haven't we had Ash Wednesday yet - isn't it always in February?

Last year at this time, (most years at this time) we had already celebrated Ash Wednesday and were well into the season of Lent. This year Ash Wednesday isn't celebrated until March 8. The date of Ash Wednesday changes each year, depending on the date of Easter. This year Easter isn't until April 23.

So, why is Easter so late?

Basically because a church council (Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.) consisting of representatives of all Christian churches of that day, settled on a system of calculating the celebration of Easter that is tied to the first full moon after the Spring equinox (March 21 on our modern calendar). Specifically they decided that Easter would be celebrated "the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after March 21." Since this full moon can occur anywhere between March 21 and April 18, Easter can be celebrated anywhere from March 22 until April 25. This year the first full moon after March 21 isn't until the week before Sunday, April 23. Thus, that's the day of Easter this year.

Why the "convoluted calculations" to set a date for Easter?

Basically because we don't know the exact date on our modern calendars that would correspond to the actual date of the Resurrection on the ancient Hebrew calendar. We do know that the *day* of the Resurrection was Sunday, (so to keep it on a Sunday, the *date* would change each year anyway - just like it does for Thanksgiving). We also know that the Resurrection occurred the day after the Passover Festival, but the date of the Passover also fluctuates with the moon and other factors and can fall on Sunday. So, after almost 300 years of trying many different schemes for determining when to celebrate Easter, the early Church settled on the current method of "First Sunday after first full moon on or after Spring Equinox." You may notice that the Eastern Orthodox Church still celebrates Easter later than we do. That's because they use a different calendar to date the arrival of Spring.

The important thing to remember is this:

If you don't remember this explanation and come next year wonder why Easter lands on "Tax Day" - that's ok. The important thing to remember is this: Whatever the date, Jesus *did* rise from the grave - proving that God accepted his sacrifice for the sins of all people, and that all who believe Jesus truly is the Son of God and follow him will also one day (another day we can't pinpoint on a calendar) rise from our graves.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net