

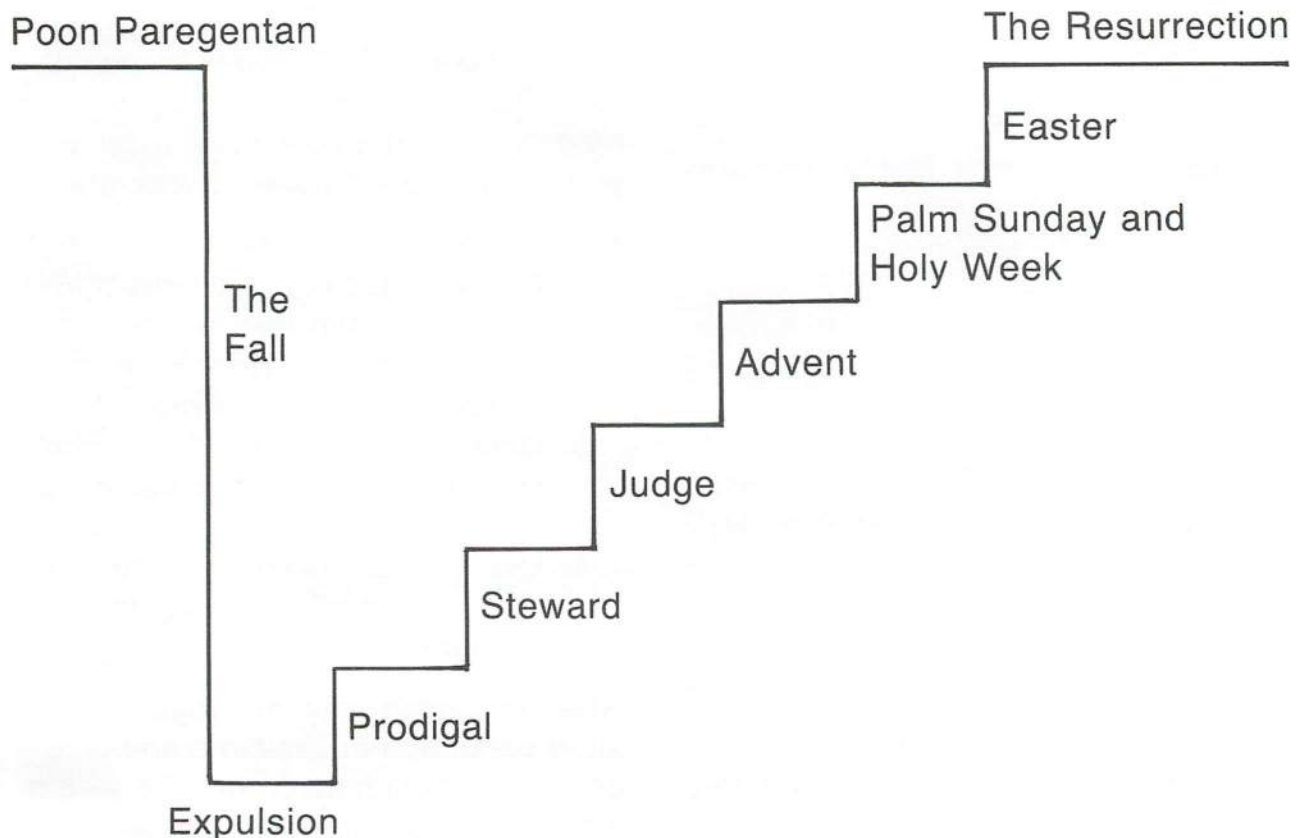
Great Lent

Great Lent (Medz Bahk) commemorates the time when Jesus went into the wilderness. While he was there, he did not eat or drink. He was tempted by the devil to turn away from his mission. But Jesus did not. After 40 days, the angels came to Jesus and cared for him.

Just as Jesus used his time in the wilderness to prepare for his mission, we use Lent to prepare ourselves for Jesus. The church helps us do this

through Bible readings, practices, and services that help us think about our relationship with God and how we can improve it.

Here is a chart of the Easter Cycle from Poon Paregentan through Easter. Great Lent starts the Monday after Poon Paregentan and ends the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Study the chart to see how we progress and prepare ourselves for Jesus.



The Easter Cycle

Poon Paregentan (Gen. 2:1-9, 15-17, 21-23). A happy celebration of how God intended life to be when he created Adam and Eve and gave them Paradise.

The Sunday of Expulsion (Gen. 3:1-24). A sad remembrance of the sin of Adam and Eve: disobeying God. People have lost Paradise and realize the consequences of sin, separation from God.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32). This is the first step in our process of regaining the lost Paradise. The story of this Sunday is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He asks his father for his share of his inheritance and sets off for worldly adventures. When everything is gone, he comes home to ask his father if he can be a servant in his father's house. His father sees him as he is coming home and knows this son wants to be back with his family again. The father runs out to greet the son and accept him back, not as a servant, but as his son again. The older son complains, but the father reassures him that there will always be a place for the older son in his home. He wants the older son to know how happy he is that the younger son is home. The lesson this story teaches us is that we have to turn away from sin and back to God. We have to ask God for forgiveness. God is happy when we return to him.

The Sunday of the Steward (Luke 16:1-13). The parable tells us of a man who is in charge of his boss' bills. The

boss finds out the steward has not been doing his job well. He asks the steward to show him all the bills before he will be fired. The steward thinks of a way to make sure he will have a new job when he loses this one. He calls each of the people who owe his boss and tells them they can pay back less than they owe. Each person is happy to pay less and the steward thinks one of them will give him a job. The lesson is that we have lost our original paradise so we must use all our intelligence to gain the new Kingdom that Jesus has promised us.

The Sunday of the Judge (Luke 18:1-8). This story is about a woman who has a case in court that the judge has not settled yet. She keeps after him every day to settle it. The judge doesn't care about the woman, but he wants to be rid of her so he settles her case. Jesus tells us that the judge settled the woman's case even though he didn't care about her because she kept after him to do so. Jesus then tells us that God, who loves us very much, will do for us what we ask him to do if we continually pray for it. (God gives us what is good for us). What we should always ask God for is to be accepted into the Kingdom.

The Sunday of Advent (Mark 13). On this Sunday we are told about what will happen when Jesus comes again. This world as we now know it will end. Christ will come and resurrect the dead. The living and the dead will be judged. Those who have lived their

lives as God wants them to will be accepted into the Kingdom.

Palm Sunday. Jesus enters Jerusalem welcomed as the Son of God. He teaches and heals people. He warns those who are not living according to God's will to change their ways.

Holy Week. On Friday Jesus is arrested and tried before the Roman Governor and the Hebrew leaders. He is condemned to death on the cross even though he is innocent of the charges.

On Great Saturday Jesus talks to those who have died before he came. He gives them a chance to choose the Kingdom.

Easter. Jesus ascends to Heaven to prove to all the Kingdom is real and ready for us, when he will come again. Now all know Jesus is really God and that what he taught us about how God wants us to live is true. God has given us a new chance to be with him. The Old Covenant is ended. The New Covenant is begun. Now anyone who believes in Jesus and follows his teachings can come to the Kingdom.

Great Lent Then and Now



Hi. My name is Hripsime. I lived in Armenia long ago. In those days this is how we commemorated Great Lent.

On Poon Paregentan our whole village would go to church and receive communion. Then we would hurry home and change into costumes so no one could see who we were. We would meet each other in the village square and soon there would be singing and dancing. Music would fill the air and we would form a parade trying to guess who everyone was. There would be fruit to eat and cheese and bread and sweets. Then, after enough party time had gone by, our priest would remind us to hurry home and be ready for Medz Bahk. This would be the last party for a long, long time. This would be the last time we would eat pilaf made with butter. Now it would be made with olive oil and it wouldn't taste the same. Tonight we would enjoy fish, chicken, lamb, and beef, but tomorrow there would be none.

On Monday and every day for forty days, we would go to service at our village church. We would eat only enough food to keep us well. We'd gather