

## Ember Days Narrative

A long time ago, in a world that seems so very far away, Christian traditions rooted in simple faith thrived among the flock. One such tradition is the celebration of what are known as Ember Days.

What are these mysterious days of penance and fasting? Their name alone evokes thoughts of a glimmer of light shed upon a dark world. And yet the story of the practice of this devotion has nothing to do with embers, kindling, or ashes, though it is true that the image of glowing splinters of hot coals did appear in my mind's eye when I first learned of them. They still do.

As it turns out, Ember Days have more to do with Vivaldi's Four Seasons, than they do with glowing embers or mysterious bonfires on dark nights. But I daresay I believe that they have something very much to do with keeping the fire of the Christian Faith alive.

In the early Church, the celebration of these particular days was not just left to the flock as a mere devotion. No. Their significance was of such importance that they were added to the liturgical calendar, and celebrated four times throughout the year in conjunction with the changing of the seasons.

Some scholars argue that they may have been instituted from the very beginning of the Church, possibly by St Paul and his successors, as a way of bringing those living in the Roman Empire to God by means of consecrating already existent celebrations devoted to their pagan gods. In terms of the Ember Days, the old saw that pagan practices were co-opted by Christians is absolutely true. By reorienting folks towards giving thanks to the one true God, Christianity made the old practice both new and true.

But what was lost has been found, and that is what learning of the Ember Days was like for me. As I came to embrace my faith more and more, I found that what I really wanted to do was eat, sleep, and breathe it. Breathe it in like I breathe air in order to live. Swim in it like a fish does in the ocean, etc. Today, we celebrate with our new refreshed Vocations team, the aims to realize something of God's calling for all of us. We are all serving God, not just those with clerical collars, or fancy titles. Each and every one of us has been blessed with particular gifts and skills – and we are all working for the same common good.

Whether you'll see Ember days as the glowing sparks of a way of life that will burst into flame at any time, or simply a time to mark the changing of God's creation through the seasons, try to find time to look around, and see how glorious is God's blessing to us, and through us, to the people and communities we serve.