

HOW THE DATE OF EASTER IS DETERMINED

Easter is a moveable feast, which means it doesn't occur on the same date every year.

The Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. set the date of Easter as the Sunday following the paschal full moon, which is the full moon that falls on or after March 21.

We know that Easter always occur on a Sunday, because Sunday was the day of Christ's Resurrection. But why the paschal full moon? Because that was the date of Passover in the Jewish calendar, and the Last Supper (Holy Thursday) occurred on the Passover. Therefore, Easter was the Sunday after Passover.

The date of Ash Wednesday is determined by the date of Easter, which is on April 5 this year. Count back 46 days from April 5 and you arrive at this year's date for Ash Wednesday, February 18.

Why 46 days? Lent is a 40-day period of prayer and penance. However, the Sundays during Lent aren't considered part of Lent, because Sundays are always celebrated as the Lord's Day, even during Lent. Add 40 days to the 6 Sundays and you get 46 days.