

## Ember Days in the ADGL

As Anglicans, we celebrate the "Red Letter Holy Days" as a spiritual discipline which is part of our tradition. An example is the Feast of the Holy Cross (September 14), when we honor and celebrate Christ's gift to us on the Cross as part of our Anglican Cycle of Holy Days. One issue of significance for those seeking ordination is the fact that the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following Holy Cross Day are "**EMBER DAYS**" (see page 689 in the BCP 2019 for additional information).

In the liturgical Calendar, "Ember Week" is one of the four weeks during the year when three "Ember Days" appear in the Anglican church year. These quarterly days, which were traditionally times of preparation for ordination, developed in the medieval Western Church. Ordinations would often occur on the Sundays *following* them. At these times, the faithful were enjoined to pray especially for priestly vocations. According to the 2019 BCP's "Calendar of the Christian Year:

Ember Days are set aside for prayers for those called to Holy Orders, and occur on the following Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays:

- After St Lucy's Day *December 13*
- After the First Sunday of Lent
- After the Day of Pentecost
- After Holy Cross Day *September 14*

In addition to being days set aside to pray for those preparing for ordained ministry and those who are serving in Holy Orders in the churches, in our Anglican practice, there is also a very practical reason for those in the process of discernment towards ordination to remember Ember Weeks: The policy in many dioceses is for all candidates or postulants for Holy Orders to report to their bishops during these weeks on their prayer life, sense of vocation and personal life, academic experience, and spiritual formation for ministry. In other words, "Ember Day Letters" are coming due!

This is the time for you to send a short letter to your Bishop to catch them up on:

- 1] how is your relationship with God and your prayer life growing (or not)
- 2] how is your personal life and/or marriage going
- 3] how are you progressing in your studies or academic growth
- 4] how is your physical health
- 5] any particular troubling issues

Regardless of your particular calling, we encourage all those in the discernment process towards ordination to submit to this discipline and write a letter to his or her pastor and bishop addressing the general areas mentioned above. These relationships are an important part of the discernment process, initiating the spiritual discipline of being in an accountability relationship, which is so important to those called to leadership in the Church. Ember Days are good reminders of this, especially for those who are ordained or seeking to be ordained.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to this practice. The expectation of writing four letters each year to your bishop and sponsoring priest will continue throughout your time as a postulant, first year as a deacon, first year as a new priest, and is a good practice to continue regardless of the capacity in which you serve. This is not about rules or law but is about grace; a demonstration that someone cares about you and your calling, is praying for you, and wants to support you in being the best you can be.

Be proactive in your communication to build a strong relationship with your Bishop who is supervising you! It does not need to be a long letter but a quick connection you can make four times a year.

*Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd who cares for his flock: We ask you to bestow upon your Church the gift of the Holy Spirit in abundance, and to raise from among us, faithful and able persons called to the ministries of Deacon, Priest, and Bishop. Inspire them to spend and be spent for the sake of the Gospel, and make them holy and loving servants and shepherds of the flock for whom you shed your most precious blood. Grant this for the sake of your love. **Amen.***

*2019 BCP*