

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY?

Dom Prosper Guéranger, O.S.B., abbot of Solesmes from 1837-1875, devoted a whole volume of his great work – *The Liturgical Year* to Septuagesima. In his Preface, Dom Guéranger referred to Septuagesima as a season of “transition, inasmuch as it includes the period between two important Seasons, – Christmas and Lent.”

In the chapter titled “The History of Septuagesima,” Dom Guéranger added, “The Church, therefore, has instituted a preparation for the holy time of Lent. She gives us the three weeks of Septuagesima, during which she withdraws us, as much as may be, from the noisy distractions of the world, in order that our hearts may be the more readily impressed by the solemn warning she is to give us, at the commencement of Lent, by marking our foreheads with ashes.”



Septuagesima Sunday is the ninth Sunday before Lent, and it is the day that begins the Septuagesima season, which is made up of three Sundays: Septuagesima (which means seventieth), Sexagesima (which means sixtieth), and Quinquagesima (which means fiftieth), and then it extends until Ash Wednesday.

As Dom Guéranger explained, the mysteries of this Septuagesima “season of holy mourning” are based on the number seven, which is one of the most significant of all the numbers associated with the doctrine of the Catholic faith. In one way, the season of Septuagesima can also be seen as embracing the whole time between the Sunday of Septuagesima and Easter.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY?

HOW ARE WE TO KEEP SEPTUAGESIMA?

Dom Guéranger also tells us how we are supposed to keep Septuagesima:

- ❖ By entering into the spirit of the Church in sober, mournful, preparation for the penitence of Lent
- ❖ By growing in holy fear of God
- ❖ By considering what original sin and our own sins have done to deserve God's judgments
- ❖ By rising up from indifference
- ❖ By realizing our need for the saving sacrifice of Christ that we will remember in great detail during Lent

“After having spent the three weeks of Septuagesima in meditating upon our spiritual infirmities, and upon the wounds caused in us by sin, —we should be ready to enter upon the penitential season, which the Church has now begun. We have now a clearer knowledge of the justice and holiness of God, and of the dangers that await an impenitent soul; and, that our repentance might be earnest and lasting, we have bade farewell to the vain joys and baubles of the world. Our pride has been humbled by the prophecy, that these bodies would soon be like the ashes that wrote the memento of death upon our foreheads.” – Dom Guéranger in “The Practice of Lent” in The Liturgical Year.