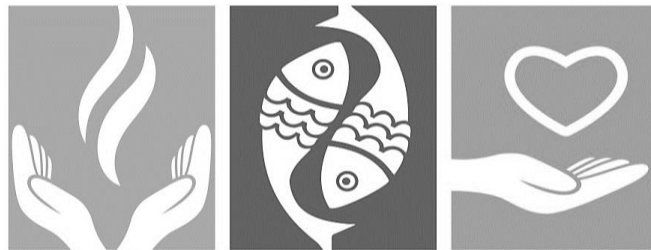


# Lent



## Where does the term “Lent” come from?

“Lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “*lencten*,” which means springtime. The Latin name for Lent, *Quadragesima*, means forty. It refers to the forty days Christ spent in the desert. This is also the origin of the Lenten season.

## When is Lent?

“Lent runs from Ash Wednesday until the Mass of the Lord’s Supper (Holy Thursday), exclusive.”  
(GNLY, 28)

## When does Lent begin?

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday.

## When does Lent end?

Lent ends before the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, on Holy (Maundy) Thursday.

## How long is Lent?

It is approximately 40 days, which is a reference to the forty days Christ spent in the desert. It also reminds us of the 40 days Moses was on Mount Sinai.

## What is the purpose of Lent?

Lent is a season of prayer and penance before Easter. During Lent we meditate on “The Four Last Things”: death, judgment, heaven, and hell.

“Lent is a preparation for the celebration of Easter. For the Lenten liturgy disposes both catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery: catechumens, through the several stages of Christian initiation; the faithful, through reminders of their own baptism and through penitential practices.”

(GNLY, 27)

## How do you prepare during Lent?

We practice the three pillars of Lent (prayer, fasting, and almsgiving). We also fast and abstain. One of the best ways to prepare for Easter is to go to Confession. Many Churches have added Confession times so that people can go often during Lent.

## What are the colors for Lent?

Violet is used for all of Lent. Rose or violet may be used for Laetare Sunday.

## What are the Sundays before Lent?

These Sundays are now part of Ordinary Time. In the old liturgical calendar the three Sundays preceding Ash Wednesday are thus:

**Septuagesima** – It is the 9th Sunday before Easter and the 3rd Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

**Sexagesima** – It is the 8th Sunday before Easter and the 2nd Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

**Quinquagesima** – It is the 7th Sunday before Easter and the Sunday just before Ash Wednesday.

## What is Shrove Tuesday?

Also known as “Fat Tuesday,” this is the day preceding Ash Wednesday. Traditionally, this is the day when people went to Confession before Lent began. It is also a day of feasting before Lent when Catholics would use up “rich” ingredients (butter, eggs, etc.) before Ash Wednesday.

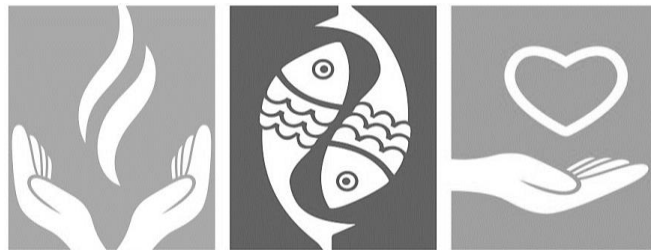
## What is Ash Wednesday?

It is the first day of Lent. While not a Holy Day of Obligation, Ash Wednesday is a beautiful time to attend Mass and receive ashes on your forehead. We remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return. It is also a day of fasting and abstinence. We fast (2 small meals + 1 “regular” meal and NO snacking) and do not eat meat on this day.

## What is Laetare Sunday?

It is the 4th Sunday of Lent and falls midway through Lent. The name is taken from the Introit at Mass, “*Laetare Jerusalem*” (Rejoice, O Jerusalem!). Laetare Sunday reminds us to look forward to the end of the penitential season and of the joy in anticipating the Resurrection (Easter).

# Lent



## *What are the three pillars of Lent?*

Taken from the Gospel reading on Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-18), Christ tells His disciples how to live a truly Christian life.

**Prayer** – listening and talking to God. In Matthew 6, Jesus gives us the Lord’s Prayer and implores us to pray often.

**Fasting** – brings us closer to God. Christ tells us, “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do... But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:16-18).

**Almsgiving** – by giving to those in need we are putting them before ourselves. We need not be public about our almsgiving because that turns the focus on us, seeking praise.

## *Why do we give something up for Lent?*

A good Lenten tradition is to give something up (fasting). Sacrifices help us to appreciate the true abundance in our lives. Many people also add good works: saying extra prayers, giving to the needy, etc.

## *What about fasting and abstinence?*

On Fridays, we abstain from meat. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote about why we abstain from meat on Fridays. It is not just a form of penance, but also helps us to overcome the “passions of the flesh.”

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday we not only abstain from meat, but we also fast. Fasting means we eat two smaller meals and one “regular” meal. The two smaller meals should be smaller than your one regular meal. You should also avoid snacking in between meals.

## *Why do we “bury the alleluia?”*

“The Alleluia is not used from the beginning of Lent until the Easter Vigil.” (GNLY, 28) It is a kind of verbal “fast” that dates to the 5th century.

## *Are Precepts of the Church tied to Lent?*

Yes! You should go to Confession in preparation for receiving the Holy Eucharist. (CCC 2042) Also, “you shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.” (CCC 2043).

## *Why do we cover statues during Passiontide?*

This is an ancient Catholic tradition that starts on the 5th Sunday of Lent. On that day, the old Gospel reading tells us how Jesus hid himself away when the Jews tried to stone Him. “They took up stones therefore to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.” (John 8:46-59)

To help us better understand this mystery we veil Crucifixes and images with violet (purple) cloth from the evening before the 5th Sunday of Lent all the way through Holy Saturday.

## *What are some Lenten traditions?*

Along with the three pillars of Lent—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—many people also perform charitable acts. One of the best Lenten traditions is attending the Stations of the Cross, especially on Good Friday. Many Churches pray the Stations at 3 PM on Good Friday, the approximate time of Christ’s death. You can also find many Friday Lenten meals (soup suppers, fish fries, etc.) at area Churches.

## *What are the Stations of the Cross?*

The 14 Stations of the Cross depict Christ’s last moments on Earth. They help us to remember His suffering and death by taking us from Pilate condemning Jesus, his climb up Calvary, death on the Cross, and being laid in the tomb.