

# LENT

## What is Lent?

Traditionally Lent is the Liturgical season of 40 days leading up to Easter Sunday that starts with Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Sunday). It does not include each Sunday as this day is linked with the resurrection.

## Why 40 days?

The number 40 has symbolic significance. It is a traditional number symbolising a lifetime. In the Bible it is used to suggest a generation or a symbolic lifetime... a period of growth and change. Thus Moses stayed on the Mountain of God forty days (Exodus 24:18 and 34:28), the spies were in the land for forty days (Numbers 13:25), Eli jah travelled forty days before he reached the cave where he had his vision (1 Kings 19:8), Nineveh was given forty days to repent (Jonah 3:4), and most importantly, prior to undertaking his ministry, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness praying and fasting (Matthew 4:2).

## Ash Wednesday

The season of Lent is marked with a special liturgy on Ash Wednesday during which we are marked with the sign of the cross traced on our foreheads using ashes. Ashes are a symbol of mourning and penance in the Bible.



## Lenten Promises

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the Lenten journey. It is a special day on which to reflect and decide upon what special 'promise' to make for the Lenten season. Catholics are asked to make a special 'promise' on Ash Wednesday to commit themselves to something they could do in their lives to help them renew their relationship with God and live the Gospel values more fully.

**During Lent, the word Alleluia is not used at all!**

## Fasting at Lent

In the Lenten season Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are special days where Catholics are asked to 'fast' (only eat what is necessary for good health and go without the 'luxury' or extra quantity of foods) and to abstain from eating meat. You do not have to fast as a child.

## What should we do during Lent?

Lent is a time to notice God's work and to receive God's mercy. Fasting, Charitable works (Almsgiving) and prayer are the three traditional practices during Lent.

The scriptures during this time, challenge us to also consider how we can repair our relationship with God and with others to become the person that God calls us to be. It is a time to seek healing and reconciliation, and a time for renewing and restoring our commitment to God. It is a time for shedding some of the 'baggage' of our lives that prevents us from being totally open to God. The season of Lent challenges us to ask the questions: "What is it in my life that is in need of healing?" "What could I change in my life in order to more fully live the Gospel values?"

