

A BRIEF GUIDE TO LENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

What is Lent and When Does it Start?

Lent is one of the five seasons of the Catholic liturgical calendar (Advent, Christmas, Easter, and Ordinary Time are the other four.)

The exact start of Lent changes every year, but this year it begins on March 5, 2025.

When Does Lent End 2025?

Lent ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. This year, Holy Thursday is April 17, 2025. This is also called Maundy Thursday. “Maundy” is from the Latin word “Mandatum” which means command. Jesus commanded his 12 disciples to “Love one another as I have loved you.”

What does Lent mean for Roman Catholics?

Lent is a solemn season of preparation, as we get ready for Easter (the celebration of Christ’s resurrection!) It is 40 days of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving where we remember Jesus’ 40 days, he spent in the desert fasting and being tempted by Satan after His baptism. We use this time to grow closer to God, limiting distractions and repenting for our sins.

Who Celebrates Lent?

Lent is associated with the Catholic Church, but some Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and other denominations may celebrate Lent in some way.

Pray, Fast, Give.

During Lent, we grow closer to Jesus by praying, fasting, and giving. This means praying more, not eating meat on certain days as well as giving up other “comforts,” and donating our money, time and talents to charities and organisations in our communities or nationally such as Trocaire, The Catholic Bishops Overseas Development Agency.

Why Fast During Lent?

Traditionally, Roman Catholics abstain from meat and eat much less on certain days to develop greater self-discipline and help purify our spirit to become closer to God. Fasting is a sacrifice that dates to the early Church. Traditionally for Lent, Catholics fasted on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays during Lent. Today there are two days of fast and abstinence that Roman Catholics are called on to observe. They are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. If you are a young child, older person or ill you are not required to fast.

Those asked to fast are also called on to fast in other ways during Lent. This is a time to give up some of our comforts to focus on the sacrifice Christ made on the Cross.

This is a time to remember our Baptism too, when we began our new life in Christ (many adults going through RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation) to become Catholic are preparing to be baptized as well!) In some parish communities these adults are baptised at the Easter Vigil ceremony.

What is Ash Wednesday?

The first day of Lent is called Ash Wednesday. Ashes in the shape of a cross are put on our forehead at Mass. Schools, hospitals and other organisations may have prayer services or brief prayers before ashes are distributed. Usually, ashes are distributed by a priest but can also be distributed by a lay person. In schools, the School Chaplain or Teachers of Religious Education may distribute ashes. They remind us that our death will come, and we need to prepare by seeking to follow God's Will. The priest or lay minister will say the words 'Repent and Believe The Good News' as they bless your forehead with the blessed ashes. In former times the words used were 'Dust You Are and Into Dust You Shall Return.' The response is 'Amen'.

Lent is one of the most solemn liturgical seasons in the Church's Year. More solemn songs replace hymns during Mass. The "Gloria in Excelsis," is omitted, as is the "Alleluia" typically sung before the Gospel.

Why is the colour Purple Associated with Lent?

Purple is the liturgical colour of Lent because it symbolizes repentance. It also symbolizes Christ's royalty as King of all kings.

Some Short Prayers for Lent.

A quite simple prayer for Lent that is typically said during **the Stations of the Cross** goes like this:

"We adore You O Christ and we bless you.

Because by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the World."

<https://cultivatingcatholics.com/catholic-lent-2023-a-complete-guide-to-lent/>

Prayer for Forgiveness: "Dear Lord, during this Lenten season, help me to recognize my shortcomings and turn my heart towards you in seeking forgiveness. Grant me the strength to do better and grow in your grace. Amen."

Prayer for Guidance: "Heavenly Father, as I embark on this Lenten journey, guide my steps and illuminate my path with your wisdom. May your Word be a lamp to my feet and a light to my soul. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

Prayer for Spiritual Renewal: "Lord Jesus, during Lent, I seek a deeper connection with you. Fill me with your Holy Spirit, cleanse my heart, and draw me closer to your love and grace. Amen."

Prayer for Self-Denial: "Gracious God, as I practice self-denial during Lent, may I grow in humility and reliance on you. Help me to turn away from worldly distractions and focus on your presence and purpose. Amen."

Prayer for Compassion: "Dear God, during this Lenten season, open my heart to the needs of others. May I reflect your love and compassion in my actions, serving those who are suffering or in need. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/a-prayer-for-lent.html#:~:text=If%20you%20don't%20have%20a%20lot%20of%20time%20to%20set%20aside>