

LOVE

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Questions and Answers About Lent

What is the Lenten season, and why is it set apart?

It is a period of six weeks preceding the anniversary of the Saviour's death, and is set apart as a special season of fasting, penitence, and prayer.

Why is it called Lent?

Because it always comes in the spring of the year, and the old Saxon word *lent* means "spring."

With what remarkable event in Jesus' life does the Lenten season correspond?

The forty days which he spent fasting in the wilderness.

Why is the first day of Lent called Ash Wednesday?

It is called so from the custom that prevailed in the early church of sprinkling ashes on the heads of penitents the first day of Lent in token of humiliation and sorrow for sin.

Are there any examples of this custom mentioned in the Bible?

Yes, the example of Daniel and of David and the people of Nineveh, to which our Lord himself refers in Matthew 11:21.

If Lent is only forty days' duration, why does it begin forty-six days before Easter?

There are six Sundays in Lent, and as all Sundays are feast days in honour of the Resurrection, they are taken out. To make up for these, six days are added to the beginning of the season

How should the Lenten season be observed by Christians?

As a special season for drawing near to God by extraordinary acts of penitence, charity, and religious devotion, and by fasting and abstinence from all things that tend to draw the heart from God.

What is the object of keeping Lent?

To deepen the religious life, to purify the heart from sin, and to unite us more closely to the Saviour.

Why does the church encourage us to observe the Lenten fast?

1. Because repentance and humiliation are essential to growth in grace.
2. Because these duties are apt to be neglected and forgotten unless some special time is set apart for their observance.

What objection do people sometimes raise against the observance of the Lenten fast?

They say that it is a useless and superstitious custom, and that Christ nowhere commanded his disciples to fast.

How do we answer this objection?

1. Fasting was a common practice not only among God's chosen people (Exod. 34:38; 2 Sam. 12:16; 1 Kings 19:8; Ps. 35:13; Joel 1:14; Jon. 3:5).
2. Jesus fasted and so did his disciples. He did not command his followers to fast; he assumed that they would and gave directions on how to fast (Matt. 6:17). Fasting has the highest divine authority.
3. A few persons who accept the principle of Lent complain that the season is so long that people weary of its observance relax its discipline. But it is intentionally made long so that it must be kept by ordered rule and rational self-control, instead of impulsive actions and emotions.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
February 23	February 24	February 25 <i>Shrove Tuesday</i>	February 26 <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	February 27	February 28	February 29
			Day 1 <u>Exodus 1</u>	Day 2 <u>Exodus 2</u>	Day 3 <u>Exodus 3</u>	Day 4 <u>Exodus 4</u>
March 1	March 2	March 3	March 4	March 5	March 6	March 7
	Day 5 <u>Exodus 5</u>	Day 6 <u>Exodus 6</u>	Day 7 <u>Exodus 7</u>	Day 8 <u>Exodus 8</u>	Day 9 <u>Exodus 9</u>	Day 10 <u>Exodus 10</u>
March 8	March 9	March 10	March 11	March 12	March 13	March 14
	Day 11 <u>Exodus 11</u>	Day 12 <u>Exodus 12</u>	Day 13 <u>Exodus 13</u>	Day 14 <u>Exodus 14</u>	Day 15 <u>Exodus 15</u>	Day 16 <u>Exodus 16</u>
March 15	March 16	March 17	March 18	March 19	March 20	March 21
	Day 17 <u>Exodus 17</u>	Day 18 <u>Exodus 18</u>	Day 19 <u>Exodus 19</u>	Day 20 <u>Exodus 20</u>	Day 21 <u>Exodus 21</u>	Day 22 <u>Exodus 22</u>
March 22	March 23	March 24	March 25	March 26	March 27	March 28
	Day 23 <u>Exodus 23</u>	Day 24 <u>Exodus 24</u>	Day 25 <u>Exodus 25</u>	Day 26 <u>Exodus 26</u>	Day 27 <u>Exodus 27</u>	Day 28 <u>Exodus 28</u>
March 29	March 30	March 31	April 1	April 2	April 3	April 4
	Day 29 <u>Exodus 29</u>	Day 30 <u>Exodus 30</u>	Day 31 <u>Exodus 31</u>	Day 32 <u>Exodus 32</u>	Day 33 <u>Exodus 33</u>	Day 34 <u>Exodus 34</u>
April 5 <i>Palm Sunday</i>	April 6	April 7	April 8	April 9 <i>Maundy Thursday</i>	April 10 <i>Good Friday</i>	April 11
	Day 35 <u>Exodus 35</u>	Day 36 <u>Exodus 36</u>	Day 37 <u>Exodus 37</u>	Day 38 <u>Exodus 38</u>	Day 39 <u>Exodus 39</u>	Day 40 <u>Exodus 40</u>
April 12 <i>Easter Sunday</i>	April 13	April 14	April 15	April 16	April 17	April 18

Lent

On Ash Wednesday, the church marks an important transition, beginning the great cycle of Easter that extends from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost. The season of Lent is not primarily a meditation on the suffering and cross of Christ; this is saved for Holy Week. Rather, it is a season of penitence and prayer, reflection and renewal, all designed to prepare the worshiping community for the remembrance of Christ's death and celebration of his resurrection during Holy Week. More specifically, Lent is preparation for baptism. For new Christians who are baptized on Easter, Lent is a time to prepare for their new identity in Christ. For those who have been baptized, it is a time of self-examination so that they might reclaim their identity as those who have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him to new life.

Lenten Worship is a season for personal and corporate spiritual renewal. It is a time for intense study of God's Word, for meditation, for prayer, and for self-examination. It begins quietly with ashes and builds in intensity as the observance of Christ's death and resurrection grow closer.

Shrove Tuesday is the day in February or March immediately preceding Ash Wednesday, which is celebrated in some countries by consuming pancakes. In others, especially those where it is called Mardi Gras or some translation thereof, this is a carnival day, and also the last day of "fat eating" or "gorging" before the fasting period of Lent.

Ash Wednesday derives its name from the placing of repentance ashes on the foreheads of participants to either the words "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" or the dictum "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The ashes are prepared by burning palm leaves from the previous year's Palm Sunday celebrations.

Holy Week is the most significant week of the year for Christian worship. During this week the church remembers the events of Christ's passion and death. The attention of the worshiper during this week is directed to the Lamb of God, the Suffering Servant, the Saviour of the world. In worship the church traces Jesus' life through the events of the last days before his death. In doing so, it sees again its own sin and failure, but marvels at the love of Christ for the world. This is a week for careful attention, prayer-filled reverence, and profound wonder at the love of God shown in Jesus.

Palm Sunday celebrates the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and makes the beginning of his final days toward the Crucifixion and death.

The **Maundy Thursday** service enacts the giving of the new commandment of love, the inauguration of the Lord's Table (Last Supper), and the journey of Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane where he was captured and led captive toward his death.

Good Friday has always been a solemn day for prayer, repentance, and the remembrance of Jesus' death on the cross.

The **season of Easter** is the season of celebration. Christ is risen! Death is conquered! Let all the people worship the Lord! The solemn preparation of Lent and somber meditation of Holy Week gives way to victorious festivity during the fifty days of Easter.

It is important to see the fifty days of Easter as a season, anchored by Easter Sunday on one end and Pentecost on the other. Neither would be complete without the other. The church's worship centres on the paschal mystery of Christ's dying and rising. It is inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

During this season, the church remembers the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, it celebrates Christ's ascension into heaven, the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost, and begins to explore the implications of the Resurrection for the future of God's kingdom.