

HOW IS THE ASH MADE

The use of ashes, made by burning palm crosses from the previous Palm Sunday, is very symbolic.

GIVING UP RICH FOODS

Tradition has it that in Lent we fast from certain foods: foods such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods.

So that no food was wasted, families would have a feast on Shrove Tuesday, to use up all the foods that wouldn't last the forty days of Lent without going off.

The need to eat up the fatty foods gave rise to the French name *Mardi Gras* ('fat Tuesday'). Pancakes became associated with Shrove Tuesday as they were a dish that could use up all the eggs, fats and milk in the house with just the addition of flour.

WHY DOES THE DATE FOR EASTER AND LENT MOVE?

According to the Bible, Jesus Christ's death and resurrection occurred around the time of the Jewish Passover, which was celebrated on the first Full Moon following the Spring equinox (the equinox is the moment at which the centre of the visible Sun is directly above the Equator. It occurs twice in the year (Spring and Autumn)).

To avoid confusion then in 325AD the Council of Nicaea (the first council of the Church where all the bishops came together to establish Christian practices) established that Easter would be held on the first Sunday after the first Full Moon occurring on or after the Spring equinox.

Curiously, Easter is delayed by one week if the Full Moon happens to be on Sunday, which decreases the chances of it falling on the same day as the Jewish Passover.

WHEN DOES LENT END?

The sixth Sunday in Lent, Palm Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week, which is the final week of Lent. Thursday of Holy Week is known as Holy Thursday, and on this day we commemorate the Last Supper shared by

Christ with his disciples (see Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-39 and John 13:1-17:26).

WHAT DO WE DO IN LENT?

Traditionally we talk of three aspects of our actions in Lent. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving (looking after those who are poor).

PRAYER: People make a daily commitment to prayer during Lent. Or maybe they decide to attend some special Liturgy or a weekday Mass.

FASTING: Traditionally people give up cigarettes, alcohol or sweets or meat on Fridays.

ALMSGIVING: We chose to fast but many in our world have to fast out of necessity because food is scarce or they are poor. People try to be more generous with charities and those in need, traditionally in Ireland we have tended to use the Trocaire Box in Lent.

WHAT CAN I DO?

PRAY

- Attend Mass some day of the week.
- Reflect on the Gospels, why not use the Diocesan "Sundays of Lent" booklet?
- Take time to reflect on the way of the cross.

FAST

- Abstain from meat on Fridays.
- Give up something you like for the weeks of Lent.
- Abstain from alcohol.

GIVE

- Place the Trocaire Box somewhere in your home.
- Give time to teaching the Faith. Why not use the "Knowing Our Ossory Faith" booklet?
- Be a little more generous to those in need in these Lenten days.



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LENT EXPLAINED



WHY LENT?

Lent is the period of 40 days which comes before Easter in the Christian calendar. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. Lent is marked by fasting, both from food and festivities. Lent allows us time to recall the events leading up to, and including, Jesus' crucifixion.

WHY 40 DAYS?

Christians observe Lent for 40 days as that is the length of time Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his ministry. While he was there he was tempted by Satan (see Luke 4:1-13 or Matthew 4:1-11)

40 is also a significant number in Jewish-Christian scripture

- In Genesis, the flood which destroyed the earth was brought about by 40 days and nights of rain.
- The Hebrews spent 40 years in the wilderness before reaching the land promised to them by God.
- Moses fasted for 40 days before receiving the ten commandments on Mount Sinai.



WHY IS IT CALLED LENT?

Lent is an old English word meaning 'lengthen'. Lent is observed in spring, when the days begin to get longer.

THE COLOUR PURPLE

Purple is the symbolic colour used throughout Lent at our liturgies.

Purple is used for two reasons:

1. firstly because it is associated with mourning and so anticipates the pain and suffering of the crucifixion;
2. secondly because purple is the colour associated with royalty, and celebrates Christ's resurrection and sovereignty.

EAST AND WEST

Both the eastern and western Churches observe Lent but they count the 40 days differently.

The western Church (Roman Catholics) excludes Sundays (which is celebrated as the day of Christ's resurrection) whereas the eastern Church includes them. The Churches also start Lent on different days.



Western churches start Lent on the 7th Wednesday before Easter Day (called Ash Wednesday).

Eastern churches start Lent on the Monday of the 7th week before Easter and end it on the Friday 9 days before Easter. Eastern churches call this period the 'Great Lent'.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. It's a day of penitence to prepare our observance of Lent.

We are marked with ashes as a symbol of death (the death of Jesus which Lent prepares us for and to remind us of our own mortality) and secondly they are a sign of being aware of, and being sorry for, our sins.

SYMBOLISM OF THE ASHES

The marking of their forehead with a cross made of ashes reminds each churchgoer that:

- Death comes to everyone.
- They should be sad for their sins.
- They must change themselves for the better.
- God made the first human being by breathing life into dust, and without God, human beings are nothing more than dust and ashes.