

WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a period of forty days during the Church's liturgical year, (not including Sundays) which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday (the day before Easter). The word Lent comes from the Middle English "Lente" and the German "lenz" which means "Spring". Lent is time for metanoia (conversion or re-conversion to the Christian way).-- It is a time for prayer, penance, and works of charity for others. It is also a time for Christians to turn away from sinfulness and evil-- to have a change of heart--as they prepare for the joyous feast of Easter.

Traditionally Lent has been a time dedicated to remembering the forty days that Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert to prepare for his ministry. Before Lent was officially observed for 40 days, Christians observed weekly days of fasting and penances, usually the Wednesdays and Fridays of each week.

From the very beginning Lent has been an opportunity for metanoia, for embracing a lifestyle focused on God's grace and justice and for turning from sinful ways. Lent is a season of repentance and hope for church members. Like springtime itself, each Lenten season can be a time for spiritual rebirth and renewal. Vatican Council II noted that it is appropriate for Christians to read the Bible and to participate in Scripture-centered prayer services during Lent.

Note of Interest: Present church laws require very little penance compared to past laws. In this country all Lenten Fridays are days of abstinence-- no meat or meat products may be eaten on these days. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of abstinence plus fasting -- only one full meal and two smaller meals may be consumed.

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