

The Season of LENT

What is Lent?

Lent – German word that means “the spring season”



Lent originally was a preparation period for people who were to be baptized. The church used to have baptisms only on Easter and there was a period of preparation for those who were to be baptized, this was Lent.

Lent started around 100 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. There is no official “start date” for when Lent began. Earliest written reference is a letter from Dionysius to Basilides. Dionysius was Bishop of Alexandria from 248-260.

Lent even has a color. Purple is the color of Lent. It symbolizes pain and suffering; mourning and penitence.

Lent today can be used as a time to draw nearer to God. Symbolically it echoes Jesus’ 40-day fast in the desert in preparation for his earthly ministry.

3 Pillars of Lent

1. Prayer (including self-examination and repentance) – More time should be given to prayer and Scripture reading during Lent. Especially as we participate in fasting, we seek God instead of seeking what we have given up. The time of prayer during Lent is also a good time for self-examination, which should lead us to repentance and a renewed sense of appreciation for the grace of God.

“Examine yourself, to see whether you are continuing in the faith” (2 Corinthians 31:5).

2. Fasting – Fasting is an act of denial, traditionally food. During Lent we fast something. In fasting we are denying ourselves and placing more dependence on God. There is no set fast that must be done during Lent. The believer can determine, through prayer, what to give up for the season of Lent. The fasts also do not necessarily have to be for 40 days. You could fast something different each week, or give up something different on different days. The point is to deny oneself and rely on God.

Examples of Fasts for Lent:

- Meat on Fridays
- Drinks other than water
- Food until sundown
- Social Media, TV, Technology
- Fast food
- Gossiping

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4).

“But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days” (Mark 2:20).

3. Almsgiving (acts of service) – This is a sign of our care for those in need. Works of charity and service show our commitment to God. During Lent you can pick a cause to get involved in, or support financially.

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Galatians 5:13-14).

Romans 14:5-6

“One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord, and he that regards not the day, to the Lord does he not regard it. He that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks.”

---Whatever you do, do it to the Lord

Sample Lenten Prayers, Songs, Readings

From the Mozarabic Liturgy of Spain - THE ALLELUIA

Stay with us today, Alleluia,
When the morning rises,
thou shalt go thy way.
Alleluia, alleluia.
May the Lord be thy custodian, Alleluia.
And the angel of God accompany thee.
May the Lord keep thee alive
And protect thee from every evil.
Alleluia, alleluia.
The mountains and hills shall rejoice, Alleluia,
While they await thy glory.
Thou goest, Alleluia; may the way be blessed,
Until thou shalt return with joy.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Traditionally, the above Alleluia was written on a card or banner during Ash Wednesday and was 'buried'. On Easter it was uncovered and included in Easter baskets.



Ancient Prayer for Meals or Bedtime

O Lord and Ruler of Life,
take from me the spirit of idleness, despair, cupidity, and empty talking.
Yea, O Lord grant that I may see my own sins and not judge my brother.
For thou art blessed forever and ever. Amen.
(FYI - cupidity means greed, covetousness, materialism)



Opening Prayer for Ash Wednesday

Father in Heaven,
Protect us in our struggle against evil.
As we begin the discipline of Lent,
make this season holy by our self-denial.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God, for ever and ever.

Penitential Prayer of St. Augustine

O Lord,
The house of my soul is narrow;
enlarge it that you may enter in.
It is ruinous, O repair it!
It displeases Your sight.
I confess it, I know.
But who shall cleanse it,
to whom shall I cry but to you?
Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord,
and spare Your servant from strange sins.

Penitential Prayer of St. Ambrose

O Lord, who hast mercy upon all,
take away from me my sins,
and mercifully kindle in me
the fire of thy Holy Spirit.
Take away from me the heart of stone,
and give me a heart of flesh,
a heart to love and adore Thee,
a heart to delight in Thee,
to follow and enjoy Thee, for Christ's sake, Amen

Schedule for Lent

These readings and verses are suggestions. You can change them to suit your needs. The point though is it makes Lent a period of increased prayer, fasting, and service – not in hopes that once Lent is over you can return to what you were before, but instead that you will be changed and continue in what God has revealed to you during this time. *(Reading of the week courtesy of The Village Church)*



Tuesday, Feb 9, 2016

Fat Tuesday.

Eat a big meal with the family or families. Enjoy the fellowship and explain the upcoming season of Lent. Discuss what each family member has decided to give up (fast) for Lent.

For lent I am giving up _____

As a family we are giving up _____

Wednesday, Feb 10, 2016

Ash Wednesday

Possible Fasts to commemorate Ash Wednesday - Fast from sunrise to dinner. Fast from meat the whole day. Biblical fast – water only all day.

Readings for today: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Isaiah 58:1-12; 2 Cor 5:20-6:10; Matt 6:1-6; 16-21

For Kids

Having the entire family join in the season of Lent will be beneficial. You will be building a foundation that could last a lifetime. Like the tradition some families have of putting out milk and cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve or hiding Easter Eggs...walking through the Season of Lent in celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ will help kids build a foundation that will go with them as they grow.

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

First, keep it simple. Explain to kids that God gave up His Son for us, so in remembrance of that, during Lent, in anticipation of Easter, we gladly give up something to show God how much we love Him.

Explain to your kids what you are giving up, and why...and how by giving it up, you will be relying more on God, and that this is a good thing in life, to rely more on God.

Kids can give up sweets, their cell phone for a day, TV for day, video games for a day or week. Talk with your kids and help them make their decision be one that is meaningful yet attainable.

Also be sure to remind them that if they mess up, they are not punished or condemned, but find forgiveness in Christ to start all over again.

Kids:

For Lent I am giving up:
