

## From Ashes to the Last Supper



Lent offers Catholics a spiritually rich season marked by a deep call to repentance, and a renewed focus on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

This year, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18, and concludes at sundown on Holy Thursday, April 2. This 40 day period (excluding

Sundays) prepares the faithful for the celebration of Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday, April 5.

### The Meaning and Purpose of Lent

Lent is rooted in the earliest Christian practices of preparing for Easter through fasting, prayer, and repentance. The 40 day structure was formalized at the Council of Nicaea in 325, which helped standardize the Church's liturgical rhythms. The number forty echoes biblical periods of purification and preparation: Jesus' fasting in the desert, Moses on Sinai, Elijah's journey, and the flood narrative.

For Catholics, Lent is not merely a season of self-denial but a time of conversion of the heart. The Church invites the faithful to deepen their relationship with God, confront patterns of sin, and renew their commitment to discipleship. Prayer opens the heart to grace, fasting cultivates spiritual discipline, and almsgiving directs attention outward toward the needs of others.

### Some Key Practices

Catholics observe several universal disciplines during Lent:

Fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, with abstinence from meat on all Lenten Fridays.

Receiving ashes on Ash Wednesday as a sign of repentance and mortality.

Increased prayer, including Scripture reading, Eucharistic adoration, and traditional devotions such as the Stations of the Cross.

Acts of charity, which express solidarity with the poor and reflect Christ's call to mercy.

Many Catholics also adopt personal sacrifices — giving up luxuries, habits, or distractions — as a way to grow in freedom and spiritual clarity.

### A Season of Renewal

Lent invites Catholics to embrace a rhythm of reflection, sacrifice, and hope. It offers an opportunity to enter the season with fresh intentionality. Through its ancient practices and scriptural foundations, Lent remains a powerful annual call to spiritual renewal — preparing hearts to encounter the risen Christ with deeper faith and renewed purpose.

**NB:** Catholics under 16 years of age and those having completed 60 years of existence, are not submitted to the strict observance of the obligations of Lent. The same applies to the sick.

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