

# WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a 40 day season of preparation before Easter. It is a time where we are asked to reflect on our lives and on our relationship with God and others. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and finishes during Easter week. The forty days are symbolic of the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert.



*Did  
You  
Know?*

*Why we eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday?*

Traditionally, Christians gave up meat, fat, eggs and dairy products for Lent. Shrove Tuesday was the last chance to use up some of these foods before Lent begins.

*Why we receive ashes on Ash Wednesday?*

The ashes that are placed on our forehead are a symbol of our mortality and a sign of sorrow and repentance. The ashes come from burning the palms from Palm Sunday of the previous year.

*What can we “give up” or “sacrifice” during Lent?*

It may be doing without something we enjoy, like chocolate or sugar. It may also include trying harder to help others. Many children give up things like lollies, ice-cream, TV or the computer. Often, this is hard for young children to do for the whole of Lent so they could try to give something up for a week at a time.

## ✘ Lenten Fast Facts ✘

- \* *The Liturgical colour for Lent is purple.*
- \* *During Lent we are asked to support the work of Caritas through our contributions to Project Compassion.*
- \* *We do not say the “Alleluia” verse in Masses during Lent.*

## THE THREE ASPECTS OF LENT

**PRAYER:** During Lent, we are asked to try to find time in our busy lives to stop, reflect and pray.

• **FASTING:** In the past, Catholics were expected to abstain or give up meat every Friday during Lent. Now, there are only two days when this is required: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The whole idea of fasting and making sacrifices or “giving things up” is a way to try to simplify our lives a little and to discover what truly matters.

• **ALMSGIVING:** During Lent we “give alms” or donate money to those in need. One way schools do this is through Project Compassion. Each classroom has a Project Compassion box where students can support children in other countries, perhaps by giving up some of their own coins. Families could also have a Project Compassion box at home to remind them of their commitment to those less fortunate.

### Living Lent in your family - some suggestions:

- \* Pray as a family - at mealtimes, at bedtime.
- \* Place a candle/cross on the table or in a special place in your home.
- \* Encourage your children to “give up” something or to help others
- \* Contribute as a family to Project Compassion or other charities.

