

Lent

An introduction to Lent

Lent is the period of six weeks 40 days (not including Sundays) leading up to Easter, the most important festival in the Christian calendar.

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday in western Christian Churches, and climaxes during [Easter Week](#). The last week of Lent is called Holy Week.

During the 40 days of Lent, Christians remember the time when Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray before beginning his work for God. During this time Jesus was tempted several times by Satan, but was able to resist.



Fasting

Lent is a time of giving things up. For Christians, it is one way of remembering the time Jesus' fasted in the desert and is a test of self-discipline.

There are many foods that some Christians do not eat in Lent, such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. Some Christians just give up something they really enjoy such as cakes or chocolate.

Shrove Tuesday

In western Christian churches, the day before Lent starts is Shrove Tuesday. This is also known as Pancake Day. This day was traditionally the last chance to use up the foods Christians would not be eating during Lent. Today people often give up chocolate or alcohol.

Festivities take place in many cities all over the world, including Mardi Gras in New Orleans (USA), Carnival in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and Venice (Italy). People dress up, wear masks, parade and dance in the streets.

Ash Wednesday

On Ash Wednesday many western Christian churches hold services during which Christians are marked on the forehead with a cross of ashes. This is a sign of saying sorry to God for any wrong doing (penitence) and mortality.

The ashes come from burning the palm crosses from Palm Sunday of the previous year.

Lent is a time of preparation for [Easter](#), ending in Holy Week.