

WHAT EXACTLY IS LENT? THE BASICS

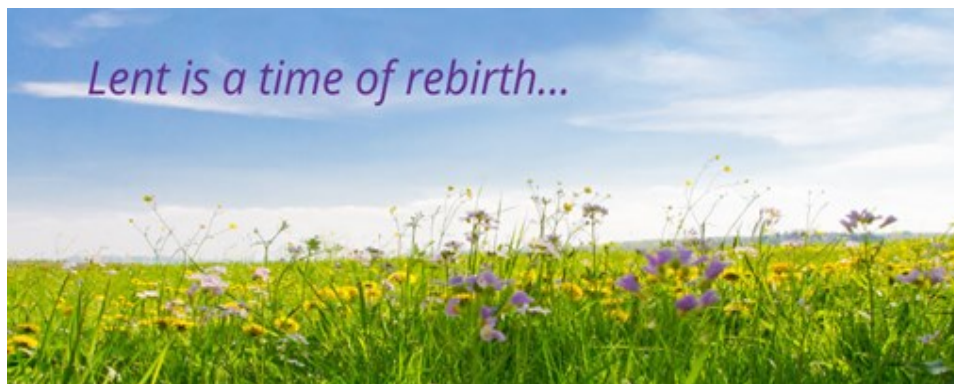
The Season of Lent



(It's Lent again!!! Oh no!! – (mqhparish.com))

When I was a boy in elementary school, the sudden arrival of Lent was usually greeted with something like: ***“Oh no, not Lent already?”*** Lent was usually looked at in a negative way and instilled fear and hardship, despite the ultimate rewards presented by Easter. These feelings were sometimes promoted by our teachers, parents, priests and commercialism and were encouraged by our lack of understanding of what it really was anyway. Besides, Christmas memories were always still bright. Happily, in more recent times, efforts have been made to allow Lent to be more easily understood and joyous, while preserving ancient traditions and meaning. Interested?? Here are a few facts and thoughts.

What is Lent?



(unityofboulder.com)

The word "Lent" comes from an old English word meaning "spring" and is a period of penance and abstinence observed by Catholics and some other Christians. Spring signifies new birth and reflects the new life promised to us through Jesus' resurrection. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (a different date every year determined by the cycle of the moon) and ends on Holy Thursday, the day before Good Friday when we commemorate Jesus' death. That's a period of 40 days if you don't count Sundays. Lent reflects the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert in preparation for his ministry on Earth.

What is the purpose of Lent?

The reason that we observe Lent is to prepare for the coming of Easter by getting closer to God and repenting of our sins. Basically, Catholics do penance in various ways in an effort to participate in some small way with Jesus' suffering in the desert.

History of Lent

Lent was officially created during the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. Originally, the rules around Lent were very strict but by the 1400s, they were gradually relaxed. Pope Gregory the Great created Ash Wednesday in the 600s. Wearing ashes is a biblical symbol of repentance and a reminder of our mortality. Wear them with pride!



Council of Nicaea – gettyimages.com.au

What penance can I do to prepare for Easter?

There are several ways in which you can do penance to prepare yourself during Lent.

- ◆ Give up something you regularly enjoy (fasting).
- ◆ Practice abstinence (no meat) on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- ◆ Seek forgiveness. Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation if you have made your First Confession.
- ◆ Forgive your friends for any questionable behaviour. Be extra nice!
- ◆ Give to the poor (almsgiving). Donate to a Food Bank, St Vincent de Paul or another worthy charity. Participate in a Holy Childhood fund raising activity.
- ◆ Pray. Go to daily Mass if possible. Say the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary with your family and/or the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Pray during the day, at the beginning and end of each day. Say Grace before meals, even in public. Encourage prayer at school.



(marist.net)

Observe Lent faithfully, have fun and you will say: “Hey, Lent is over already!”

HAPPY EASTER!