

# The Significance of Lent and Easter

## The Church of England

### What is Shrove Tuesday?

Shrove Tuesday is the traditional last opportunity to celebrate before the beginning of Lent.

For many centuries it has been the custom to observe some form of fasting during Lent, and many Christians today continue the practice of doing without a particular kind of food. Shrove Tuesday is the opportunity to use up rich food, including eggs and fat which could be used in making pancakes – hence the nickname, ‘Pancake Day’.

Shrove Tuesday is always 47 days before Easter, a date which changes every year.

### What is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and marks the start of forty days of penitence and fasting, remembering the forty days Jesus fasted in the wilderness.

On Ash Wednesday, many Christians attend church and receive the sign of the cross marked in ash on their foreheads as a sign of penitence and an expression of trust in God.

Often, the ashes used on Ash Wednesday are made by burning the previous year’s palm crosses.

### Why does the Church mark the season of Lent?

Lent is an important part of the Christian calendar as it is a time when Christians can prepare for the celebrations of Easter by reflecting on their behaviour over the last year and finding ways to live a life based on the teaching of Jesus. People do this in different ways: some people fast, eat frugally, give up treats, or give to charity.

During Lent, many people also set aside time to study the Bible and meet with other Christians to reflect on Jesus’s life and prepare for the events of Holy Week and Easter.

### Why does Lent last for 40 days?

Lent lasts for 40 days because this is the amount of time Jesus fasted in the wilderness before he began his public ministry. Sundays, which always celebrate the resurrection, are excluded from this total of forty.

### Why do people often give up something during Lent?

People often give up something during Lent as they are following the example of Jesus who fasted in the wilderness before he began his public ministry.

### What are the Stations of the Cross?

The Stations of the Cross are 14 images that depict Jesus’s journey to the cross. They are used by Christians as a focus for devotion and are arranged in a numbered order along a path to allow worshippers to go on their own pilgrimage, just as Jesus did. Each marks a specific event, starting with Jesus' condemnation and concluding with his burial.