



OUR FAITH

SIGNS OF THE SEASON

Lent

The word “Lent” has a specific religious connotation today, but originally it was used to mean “spring.”

The Color Purple

The deep purple color that fills the Church during Lent symbolizes Christ’s suffering and death but, because purple is also the color of royalty, it foreshadows Christ’s kingship and resurrection.



Ash Wednesday

On this first day of Lent, we receive ashes in the form of a cross on our forehead and are reminded to “turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.” In receiving ashes, we embrace Jesus’ journey: the cross of suffering and the promise of resurrection. We are marked as believers, as sinners, and as people in need of Christ’s forgiveness and salvation.

Forty Days in the Desert

Why did Jesus spend forty days in the desert before beginning his ministry? The number forty has a special meaning in Scripture and is symbolic of preparation before a major life change. Moses spent forty days fasting and praying on Mount Zion when he received the Ten Commandments (Ex 34:28). An Israelite patrol spent forty days spying on the land of Canaan before reporting back to Moses and Aaron (Nm 13:25). And the entire Israelite people spent forty years wandering in the desert before gaining access to the promised land (Nm 14:34). Jesus likewise spent forty days before leaving his old life as the son of the carpenter to bring new life to the entire world.

Fasting and Abstinence



- Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of both abstinence and fasting.
- Fridays during Lent are days of abstinence (abstaining from meat).
- Ash Wednesday is forty-six days before Easter, but Lent is considered forty days long, because Sundays are not counted as days of Lent.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Family Calvary Stones

The days of Lent have traditionally been used as a spiritual pilgrimage, during which we symbolically travel with Jesus to his death on the cross. To help emphasize the idea of Lent as a journey, collect forty small stones, one for each day of the season. (These are sometimes available at craft stores.) Each night at dinner, pray for one person and write his or her name with a marker on one of the pebbles. Collect the stones in a small bowl, and during Holy Week use them to make a “mound” of prayer that holds up a crucifix.

