

Lent

Lent is the period of 40 days which comes before Easter in the Christian calendar. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days.

This year's Lent may not be normal, but many have pointed out that the penitential qualities tied to this pandemic — suffering, giving up and solitude — are in fact symbolic of Lent's spiritual practice of self-denial. It could be viewed as a period of retreat with extra time for prayer or spiritual reading.

From Father Paul Keller, a Claretian Missionary priest, who is serving at St. Paul Catholic Newman Center Parish in Fresno, California, "This year, the liturgical season has also become a time to think about how we live as a community, protect each other from illness, and be part of the solution to a global health crisis." He also was hopeful Catholics would "meet these challenges, and maybe even bring about new and better ways of taking care of each other in the years to come."

Ash Wednesday comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting. The practice includes the wearing of ashes on the head. The ashes symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the priest or minister applies the ashes to a person's forehead, one of the phrases they may use is "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Even non-Christians and the excommunicated are welcome to receive the ashes. The ashes are made from blessed palm branches, taken from the previous year's Palm Sunday Mass.

Some resources for the Lenten season:

Adults

Dynamic Catholic: Best Lent Ever

www.dynamiccatholic.com/lent/best-lent-ever.html

Daily Meditations from Bishop Barron
www.lentenreflections.com

Children

Catholic Mom (scroll down to lesson plans for Lent)
www.catholicmom.com/resources