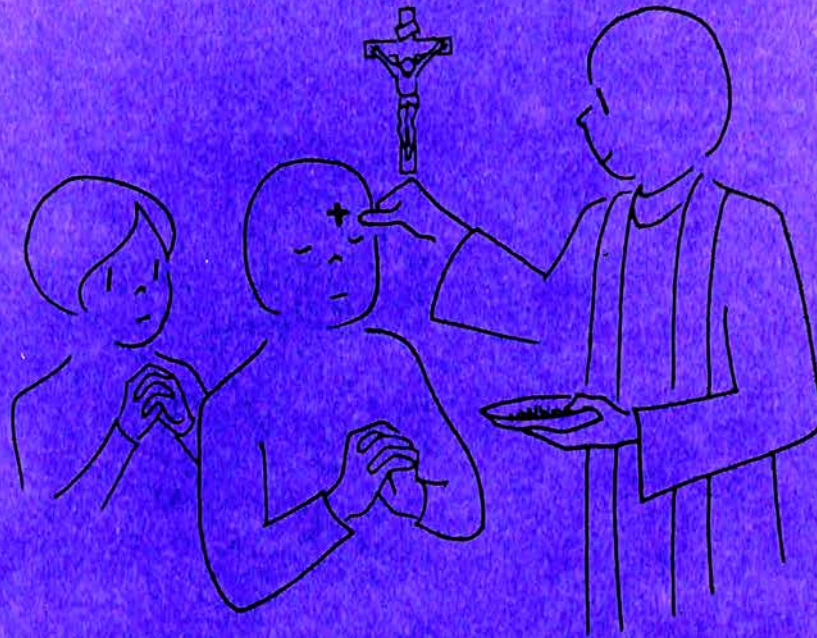


What every **CATHOLIC** should know
ABOUT

LENT



What is LENT?

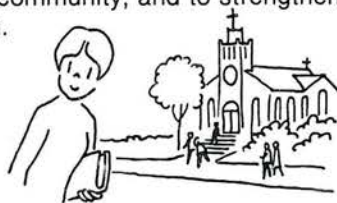
It's the **40 DAY PERIOD** in the Church year set aside for **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR EASTER**

It's a TIME OF RENEWAL

New members of the Church prepare for the purifying Sacrament of Baptism. Other Christians recall their own baptism.

TIME OF PENCE

Through special Lenten practices, Christians seek forgiveness for sins, to reconcile themselves with God, the Church and members of the community, and to strengthen faith.



NIHIL OBSTAT:
Rev. Msgr. Thomas F. Devine, Ph.D.
Lector officialis

IMPRIMATUR:
✠ Most Rev. Joseph F. Maguire, D.D.
Bishop of Springfield 20 November 1981



"Lent" is derived from Middle English "Lenten," which means "springtime."

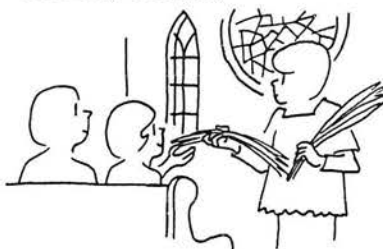
It has 2 MAIN PARTS

1 LENT PROPER

begins on Ash Wednesday and ends with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.

2 HOLY WEEK

is observed from Palm Sunday to the Easter Vigil on the following Saturday evening.



WHY is Lent IMPORTANT?

Lent prepares you to **CELEBRATE MORE FULLY** the death and Resurrection of Jesus. For individuals and the community, it **INTENSIFIES CHRISTIAN ...**

HOPE

Christians strive to understand more deeply the Paschal Mystery: Jesus' passage through death to eternal life and His promise of renewed life to those who believe.



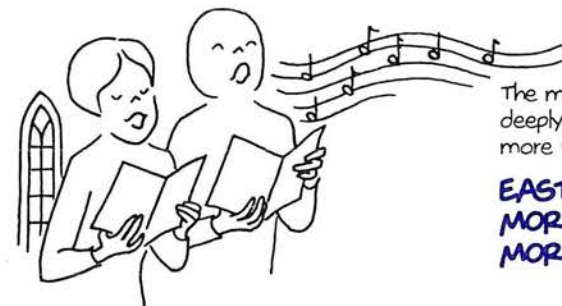
FAITH

Christians try to strengthen and increase their faith and loyalty to Jesus through spiritual discipline and purification.



LOVE

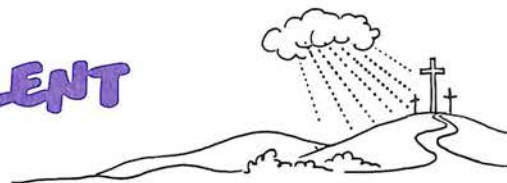
Through self-sacrifice and works of charity, Christians seek to rise above self-love and follow the spirit of Jesus' sacrifice.



The more earnestly and deeply you observe Lent, the more you benefit spiritually.

EASTER WILL HAVE MORE MEANING AND MORE JOY FOR YOU!

HISTORY OF LENT



Lent originated in early Christian times and gradually developed in connection with Baptism and penance.

ANCIENT TIMES

THE FIRST 3 CENTURIES, A.D.

The Easter celebration originally included a 1- or 2-day period of fasting before the all-night vigil and the eucharist.

BY THE 5TH CENTURY

Candidates for Easter Baptism (usually adults) entered the final stages of preparation for the Sacrament during the Lenten season. The weeks of Lent developed from this period of preparation.

Ash Wednesday became the first day of Lent. On that day, sinners publicly enrolled as penitents and were sprinkled with ashes as a sign of their repentance.



BY THE 7TH CENTURY

The days of Lent and Holy Week were more firmly established. Fewer candidates prepared for Easter Baptism, but Lent became a period of spiritual renewal for all the faithful.

MIDDLE AGES ON

The ceremonies of Holy Week and the Lenten practices of prayer and fasting were fully developed. The 40 days of fasting recalled Christ's fast (Matthew 4:2) and the fasts of Moses (Exodus 34:28) and Elijah (I Kings 19:8).



MODERN TIMES

Strict church rules regarding fasting and abstinence were gradually relaxed in favor of personally chosen penitential practices. The emphasis for the Lenten period continued to be on Christ's suffering.

Vatican Council II reaffirmed ancient themes: the faithful should recall or prepare for Baptism and do penance to make themselves ready for the Easter celebration.



TODAY

the emphasis is on --

• MEANINGFUL FORMS OF Penance

– especially positive ones, like charity and community aid that instill a greater love for God and others, and that foster inner conversion.

• PERSONAL CHOICE

– practices for spiritual renewal are left mostly to individuals and should reflect creativity and responsibility. Some Church rules do remain in effect (see p. 8).

• BAPTISMAL VOWS

– Christians recall and renew the spirit of their baptism, remembering what it means to belong to God's people.



HOW TO OBSERVE LENT

Lent is a time to prepare for the joy and the promise of the Easter celebration.



Today, as in the past, the message of Lent is one of **JOYOUS HOPE.**

Lent offers a new beginning. Through inner change and penance, true freedom and a new life are made possible.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL is based on --

TRUE SORROW FOR SINS

You must acknowledge your sins and resolve to turn back to God.

- Recall how Christ suffered for your sins.
- Seek forgiveness for your sins and take part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Pray for help to amend your life.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

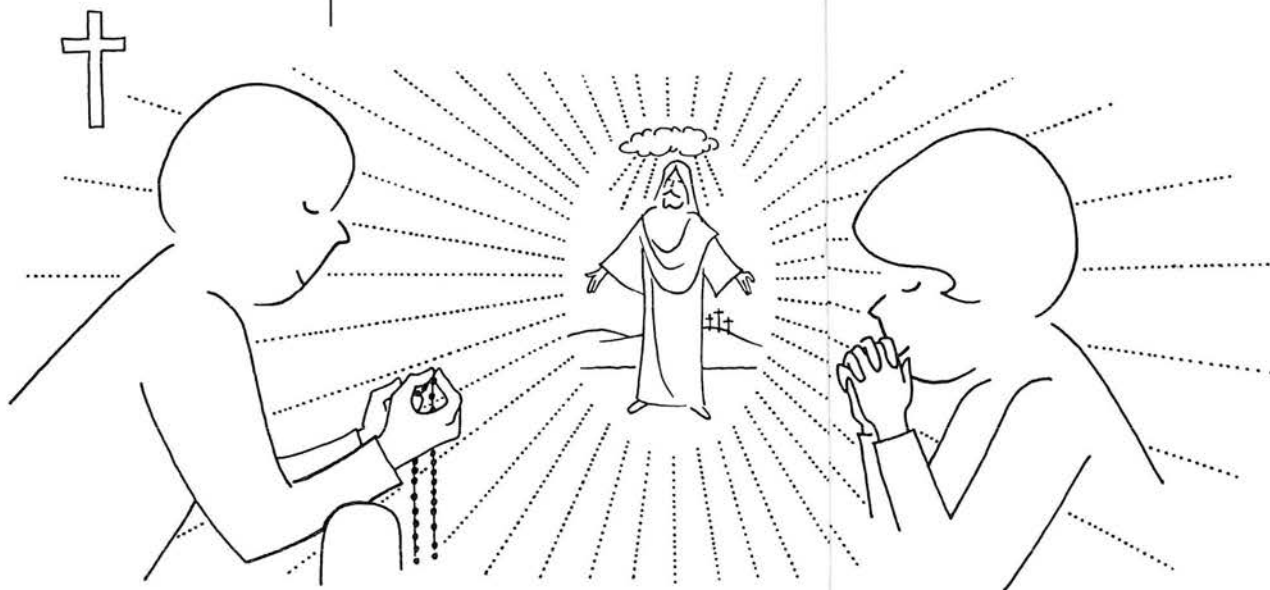
Strive to advance toward holiness. Acknowledge your total reliance on God. Cultivate Christian virtues. Reflect on the real meaning of the baptismal commitment.

- Fulfill this pledge of faith in your everyday life.
- Try to be a reflection of God's goodness.

PENANCE

Penance encourages spiritual growth. It is really a return to God, a conversion of mind and heart.

- Do penance to renew your life as a Christian.
- Follow or adapt traditional Lenten practices such as fasting and self-denial.



DEVELOP A JOYFUL APPROACH TO LENT

Devotions will be more successful if you are:

POSITIVE

Lent teaches us that there is joy in the darkest moments.

RESPONSIBLE

Decide on your own plan for Lent in accordance with Church practices.

OPEN

Be willing to admit sinfulness and the need for change.

LOVING

Fill your life with love for God and other people.

CHOOSE LENTEN PRACTICES that are best suited to your needs and hopes, and that unite you with your parish's observances...



TRADITIONAL LENTEN PRACTICES

Penitential practices help people turn to God. Many have evolved through the Church's history. Some are still part of Church law; but most are now left to personal choice.



PLAN YOUR LENT.

Use or adapt some of the following suggestions to meet your own spiritual needs.

① FASTING and ABSTINENCE

encourage spiritual maturity.

MEANING

Fasting means limiting the number of daily meals (unless impractical for medical reasons).

Abstinence means not eating certain foods.

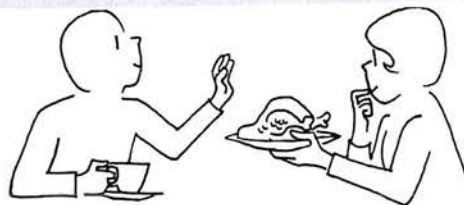
PURPOSE

These penances will help you to develop self-discipline, to achieve spiritual purification and to find forgiveness for sin.

Sacrifice cheerfully, in the right spirit – not to show off will power or personal accomplishment.

CHURCH LAW

- Fasting is usually required on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; urged on Holy Saturday.
- Abstinence from meat is required on all Lenten Fridays in many dioceses.



SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Fast an extra day or 2 each week and donate the money saved to a food relief organization.
- Try to make simpler and more healthful meals.
- Examine your life for wasteful habits; start to change them.
- Abstain from material excesses in any way you can.



② SELF-DENIAL

should benefit others in some way.

FORMS

Self-denial may take many forms; for example, foregoing an important pleasure or limiting personal desires.

Self-denial should be done for a good cause, not for its own sake.

PURPOSE

This penance will help to make you more Christ-like. It will teach self-control (needed to meet goals) and dependence on God rather than on self.



SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Devote time to help your parish or people in your community.
- Make time for reading the Bible or for increasing your knowledge of Church history or customs.
- Teach children to be less materialistic – show them how to use time and money for the greatest good.





③ GOOD DEEDS and ALMSGIVING

involve giving of the self to serve others' needs.

FORMS

Good works and charity can be: comforting or counseling someone; giving gifts of money, food, etc.; lending time and help.

Give according to your means and your love.

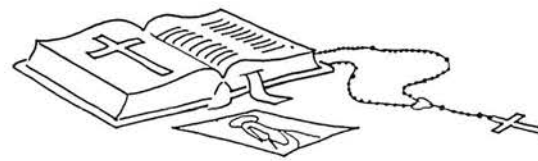
PURPOSE

These actions help to develop and perfect the love that Jesus asks of His followers. Generosity can be an expression of your gratitude to Jesus for all He has given.



SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Give to one of the many charities that aid the needy throughout the world.
- Volunteer to teach a religious education class. Serve on parish councils or on special Church committees.
- Help out your neighbors. Give food and clothes to people in need. Visit the sick, the elderly, the lonely.
- Brighten others' lives by bringing love to your daily work and obligations. Try to be kinder, more cooperative and cheerful.



④ PRAYER and REFLECTION

are guides on the path from Lent to Easter.

FORMS

- Prayer is conversing with God. It may involve asking for help, confessing sins, offering praise, listening to or just being with God. You may use your own words, repeat traditional prayers in a heartfelt way or just be silent in God's presence.
- Reflection is a form of thoughtful examination of your life thus far, including your goals, priorities and accomplishments.

PURPOSE

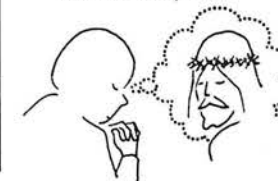
Prayer and reflection help you to better know yourself and God.

They are important for real conversion of the heart and spiritual renewal.



SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Pray the Rosary every day.
- Meditate often on Christ's Passion and Resurrection.
- Reflect on your own attitudes and behavior to see how they could be more Christ-like and to examine the direction your life is taking.
- Set aside time every day for family prayer and spiritual discussions.
- Read aloud selections from the Lenten Sunday Masses. Recite appropriate psalms from the Bible (for example, Psalm 90). Read the Gospels and the New Testament, too.





5 CHURCH SERVICES

help Christians focus on the Lenten path through liturgy and public devotions.

FORMS

Lenten services include the Mass and special devotions.

- The Mass brings Christ's death, Resurrection and Ascension into our lives. Every Mass during Lent has a special scripture reading that helps develop the themes of Lent.
- Special devotions like the Stations of the Cross recall Christ's Passion.
- Penance services are now a common part of the observance of Lent.

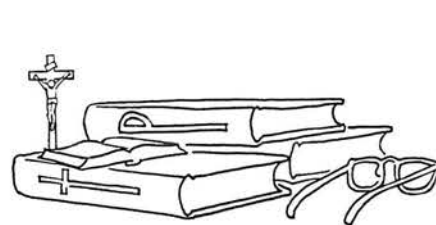
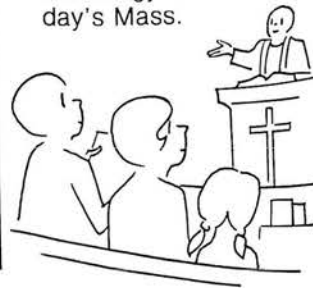
PURPOSE

Participating in community worship during Lent will help you strengthen your efforts at penance and spiritual renewal; understand better the meanings of Lent and of Christ's sacrifice; renew and deepen your relationship with God and the whole Church.



SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Participate in the Mass and receive Communion daily or as often as possible.
- Visit Church to pray or say the Stations of the Cross.
- Attend special Lenten liturgies and devotions, especially on Ash Wednesday and during Holy Week. Plan to attend Holy Thursday Mass, Good Friday Services and the Easter Vigil (descended from the original Easter service).
- Review and reflect on the liturgy of each day's Mass.



6 CHRISTIAN STUDY

strengthens faith and promotes spiritual growth.

MEANING

Christian study involves reading and reflecting on God's Word as set forth in the Bible and in Christian tradition.

PURPOSE

Christian study helps give direction to your Lenten prayers and reflections; reminds you of your purpose on earth; helps you to better understand your life and to get closer to God; instructs you in faith, virtue and spiritual growth.



SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Study the Bible. Read Christian books, magazines and newspapers.
- Attend religious education classes and lectures, or join a Lenten "renewal group."
- Help children learn about Lent by making a scrapbook that illustrates various aspects of Lent and Christ's Passion. (Use old magazines, cards, etc.) Include a Lenten calendar and check off the days until Easter.



SOME THOUGHTS

on choosing a penance and on observing Lent effectively.

SET REALISTIC GOALS

Plan carefully before Lent begins. Don't attempt more than you can carry out.

CHOOSE HELPFUL PENANCES

Make your sacrifices meaningful ones that help others.



EXAMINE YOUR ATTITUDE

Be positive and remember to make time for God.

BE HONEST

Choose a penance that really costs you effort, and then strive to carry it out with a selfless spirit.

OBSERVE LENT AS A FAMILY

Pray together. Read and discuss Scripture together. Attend Church services together.

OBSERVE LENT AS A COMMUNITY

Find out ahead of time when your parish's Lenten services will be. Attend Mass and devotions as often as possible.

YOUR ULTIMATE LENTEN GOAL should be to follow Christ, through a life of self-giving, to the Resurrection beyond death.

Soo--

Lent is a time for PENANCE and RENEWAL

THROUGH PENANCE,

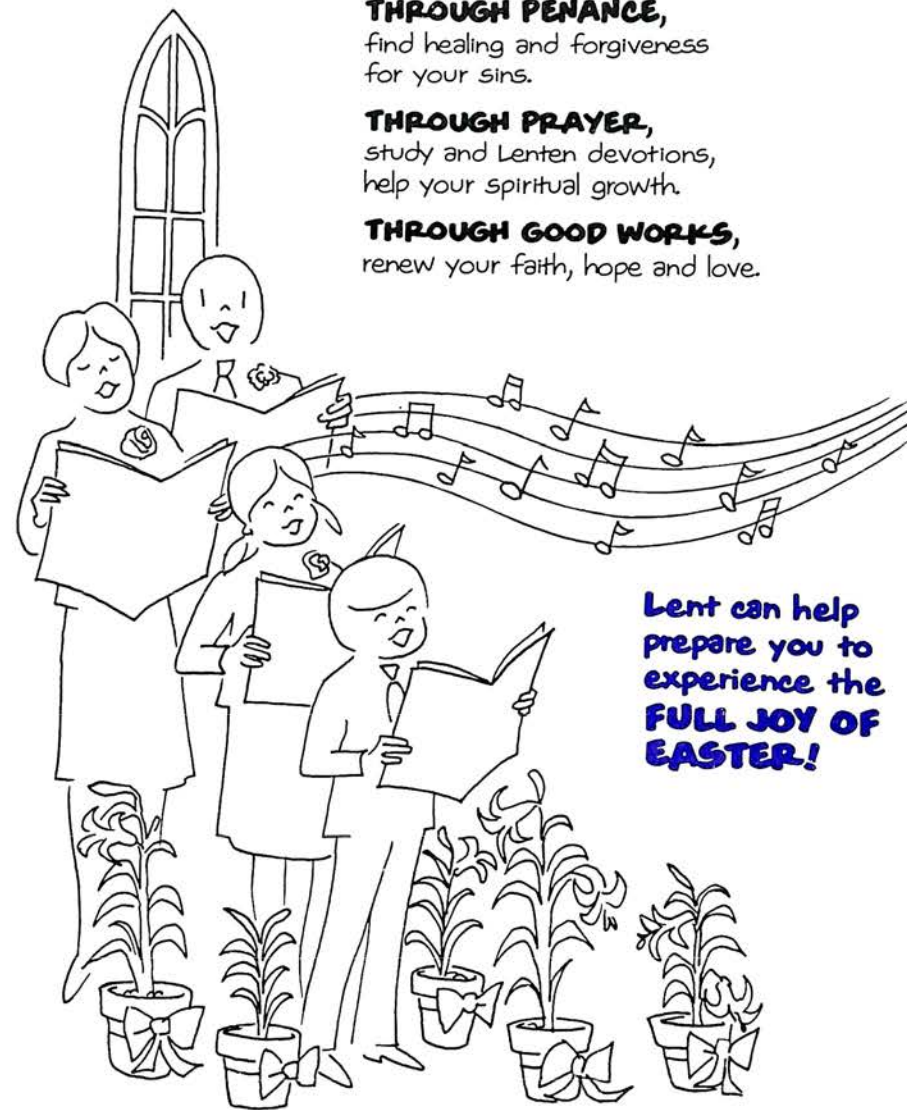
find healing and forgiveness for your sins.

THROUGH PRAYER,

study and Lenten devotions, help your spiritual growth.

THROUGH GOOD WORKS,

renew your faith, hope and love.



Lent can help prepare you to experience the **FULL JOY OF EASTER!**