

LOVE LIFE LIVE LENT

Be generous to yourself, your neighbours & the world

About Lent

Lent is the Christian season that takes us from the end of winter through to Easter and is linked to the time when Jesus went for 40 days without food in the desert. It is a reminder that Jesus went through suffering to make him stronger and more trusting in Father God.

Many people 'fast' during Lent, which means giving up food for a day or sometimes many days. The aim is to help use time and energy thinking about God, and to become cleaned out and pure.

During Lent there are a number of special days for Christians including Ash Wednesday, Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

The beginning of Lent is marked by Shrove Tuesday. This was the day when everyone used up their best and richest food such as eggs and fat, to prepare for 40 days of limited, mini-meals!

Shrove Tuesday has become known as 'Pancake Day', because traditionally pancakes used up the good food and made a feast to begin the season with. The word 'Shrive' means to confess, so people were encouraged to say sorry to God before the beginning of Lent itself.

Ash Wednesday follows the celebrations and feasting of the day before. In the past (and still now in some churches) ash is used to put a cross-shaped mark on the forehead of Christians to remind them of Jesus. The ashes used on Ash Wednesday are often from the burnt remains of the Palm Crosses used the year before at Easter.

Mothering Sunday is always on the 4th Sunday during Lent, and is a time when Mothers are remembered, thanked and celebrated.

Palm crosses are sometimes given out on Palm Sunday as a reminder of Jesus. They remind people that Jesus died and came alive again.

Palm Sunday is the day when Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on a donkey is remembered, and people grabbed palm leaves off trees to wave at him in welcome.

Maundy Thursday comes the day before Good Friday. The word 'Maundy' is based on the Latin for command, remembering Jesus telling his friends to love one-another.

Jesus and his friends met on Maundy Thursday before he died to have a feast celebrating the Passover. Their meal is sometimes called the Last Supper. The Last Supper is remembered in most churches with special services called Holy Communion or Eucharist.

Good Friday is the day when Jesus' death on the cross is remembered. It is called 'good' because, when Jesus died, he paid the price for all the bad things people do – even you and me. So now we can be forgiven and start again.

Easter Day is the Sunday, when Christians celebrate Jesus rising from the dead.

In the past Christians were baptised on the Saturday before Easter, so Lent for them was a time of getting ready by fasting (not eating food), and praying.

The modern version of Lent encourages us to give things up so that we have more time to concentrate on Jesus. It is a good thing to get our bodies cleaned up, which is why many people give up sweets or drinking at this time of year. But Lent is about allowing God to clean us up too.

Some people do really good things during Lent to make a difference to others, or to change the world. That's what 'Love life, Live lent' is all about!