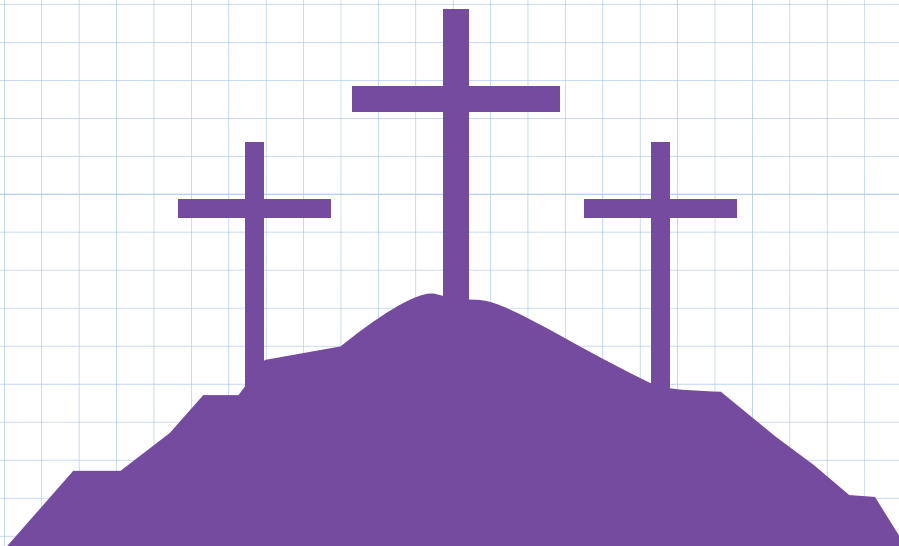


See 

LENT



Theme

Preparation

Forgiveness

Prayer

Fasting

Almsgiving

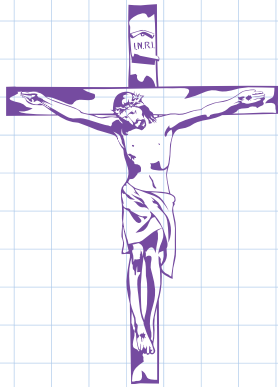


Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Ash Wednesday Gospel - The three pillars of Lent

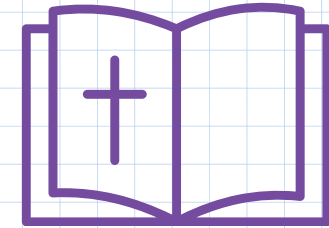
Matthew 4: 1-11 ; Mark 1: 12-13 ; Luke 4: 1-13

Jesus prepares for His ministry in the wilderness



L E N T

See 



From the cross marked on our heads on Ash Wednesday, to the cross that we venerate (kiss or kneel before), on Good Friday, our entire Lenten journey is focused on this symbol of our Christian faith. Originally a tool of torture and death, the cross has become the sign of our salvation, an act of Christ's love for each and every one of us and is the most recognisable symbol of followers of Christ.

From the 5th Sunday of Lent, crosses and other religious images may be covered, usually with purple cloth. This veiling of sacred icons reminds us that, without Jesus' ultimate sacrifice and glorious Resurrection on Easter Sunday, our faith, and everything sacred related to it, wouldn't exist. Crosses are revealed at the end of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday and images at the start of the Easter Vigil.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name
Philippians 2: 8-9



The liturgical season of Lent falls during spring, a time when days lengthen and we have the opportunity to grow in our spirituality. During Lent we are called to respond to the light of Jesus' words and acts and to grow by following in His steps as humble servants.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
2 Corinthians 4: 6

The Gospel reading on Ash Wednesday focuses on the 3 pillars of Lent - prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Word of God, found in our Bibles, guides and inspires us in how to lead our lives by spending more time with the Lord in prayer, by fasting from those things that get in the way of our relationship with God and by following Jesus' example of living out the preferential option for the poor and caring for those most in need. Throughout the Bible, the number 40 symbolises times of trial and testing - Noah and the ark, the Israelites in the desert - and most importantly reflects the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert before beginning his ministry.

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. ... Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel."
Mark 1: 12-15



Ashes mark the first day of the season of Lent. - Ash Wednesday. They are made by burning the palms from the previous Palm Sunday and reflect a sense of humility and repentance. When we are marked with the ashes it is an outward sign of an inward change and transformation throughout the season of Lent.

Although we do not use flowers (apart from Laetare Sunday, solemnities and feasts) on our prayer focus or altars, ashes symbolise fertile conditions for growth, change and new life.

then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.
Genesis 2: 7



Violet

Cycle of prayer during Lent

Candidates for the Sacraments;
especially on Sundays of Lent

Women

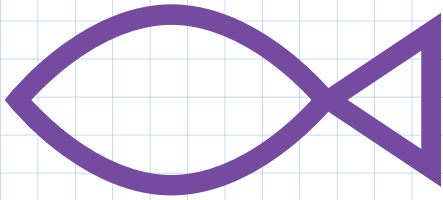
The Needy and Hungry of the World

Penitents and Wanderers

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
James 5: 16

Pope Innocent III initiated our liturgical colour sequences in the 13th century. Violet is used during Lent, the colour symbolising penance, hope and royalty and is worn by Jesus just before He died (Mark 15:17-20; John 19:1-3). Priests also wear a purple stole for the sacrament of reconciliation. On Laetare Sunday, the 4th Sunday of Lent, the colour **Rose** is used to symbolise a temporary break from the penitential tone of Lent, marking a time of joy and hope as Easter approaches. Scripture often refers to sackcloth in moments of repentance and so this is also an appropriate material to use.

And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.
Mark 15: 17

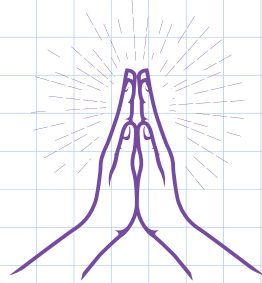


A fish is a Lenten symbol for the obligation to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and to abstain from all flesh meat on every Friday in Lent.

Jesus' first disciples were fishermen who left everything, radically changed their lives, and followed Jesus. We are each called to that same discipleship and to be fishers of men through the way we live our lives.

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4: 19



Invitations to pray through prayer cards, praying hands or prayer activities help us to focus on the first pillar of Lent. Prayer is a way to strengthen our relationship with God, to turn away from bad choices and to choose to help those who are most in need through acts of charity.

Incense is a symbol of prayer, showing how our prayers rise up to God. The pleasant smell reminds us of our hope that our faith and trust in God is pleasing to Him.

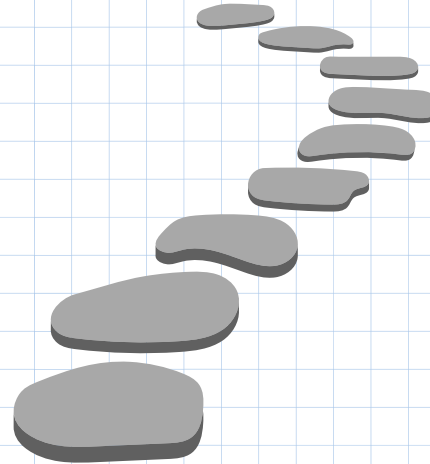
O Lord, I call upon you; hasten to me!

Give ear to my voice when I call to you!

*Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,
and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!*

Psalms 141: 1-2

See 
L E N T



The devil used stones to tempt Jesus but Jesus made them a symbol for overcoming temptation when he replied, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4; Dt 8:3).

During Lent we are invited to break away from our normal routine of daily life, and to focus on our spiritual journey. In other words, Lent is a pilgrimage – a spiritual pilgrimage to the Cross. There are challenges along the way and stones represent that a Lenten journey is not always an easy one but can always be overcome with God at our side.

*For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.*

*On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.*

Psalms 91: 11-12

Collection points or money bags and coins represent the third pillar of Lent – almsgiving. Putting our faith into action by making a sacrifice of our own time/ money/ possessions follows the example of Jesus who gave us the greatest gift and sacrifice that anyone can give – life.

Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life

Tobit 12: 8-9 NRSVCE

