

THE SEASON OF LENT

Fact File

Colour: This is the season of the colour purple. Like Advent, we dress the church in purple to signify something great, even of royal value. Purple is the colour of penitence, of waiting to get ready for a great mystery. The Lenten array is another colour used to signify the stripping away of the earthly veneer to reveal the simplicity of our resurrection faith. Red is displayed in church after Holy Week, except on Maundy Thursday when white is used. Good Friday is marked by the colour of Christ's blood.



Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness, Duccio c. 1290

Duration: 6 weeks, starting on Ash Wednesday and ending as the sun sets on Holy Saturday. It marks the period of 50 days that Jesus journeyed in the wilderness after his baptism by John. But Lent especially prepares us for Holy Week, Christ's death on Good Friday and his resurrection which we commemorate on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

Special features: We do not use the Gloria or any alleluias. So the church gives up certain things. Flowers are not displayed in the church. We sing psalms and hymns with a special penitential flavour. Lent is the time for preparing people for initiation into the church. Baptisms traditionally took place on Easter morning.

Mood: Austere but hopefully not dreary! In some churches decorative crosses and paintings are "veiled" to enhance the feeling of austerity. This is the time when we journey in the wilderness and prepare ourselves to become stronger in our faith. If we prepare well during Lent, the celebration of Easter is even more joyful!

Days of Obligation: Ash Wednesday literally marks our intention to follow Christ to the cross. Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday make up the triduum, three of the holiest days of the Christian calendar when the drama of Christ's passion, death and resurrection is lived out by Christians in their local communities.