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*Lent is the six-week season that leads up to Easter. The Lenten season is one of the most significant times of the year for many Christians around the world, especially those within the Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox churches, held at a comparable level of meaning to Advent, the arrival of Christmas.*

## *Meaning:*



*Lent is meant to be a time of repentance. A humble understanding of knowing that we are all born with the curse of sin and that repentance is required. The purpose of Lent is to fully recognize our brokenness as humans and the need for a Savior. The time period of Lent allows us to reflect and open our hearts to Jesus.*

*The main observation of Lent, fasting, is done to clear distractions and focus on Christ. Giving up something and replacing it with prayer and worship gives way to a deeper relationship with God.*

## *History:*



*Lent probably originated with the pre-Easter baptismal rituals of catechumens, although the number of days set aside for fasting varied according to region. Irenaeus (AD 180) testifies to the variety of durations of pre-Easter fasts in the second century. Tertullian (AD 200) suggests that Catholics fasted two days prior to Easter, but that the Montanists (a heretical sect that Tertullian later joined) fasted longer. However, the number forty, hallowed by the fasts of Moses, Elijah, and especially Jesus, probably influenced the later fixed time of 40 days. The Canons of Nicaea (AD 325) were the first to mention 40 days of fasting. Initially the forty day Lenten fast began on a Monday, and was intended only for those who were preparing to enter the Church at Easter. Lent still begins on a Monday in many Eastern Churches.*

*Eventually the West began Lent on Ash Wednesday, and soon the whole Church, and not just catechumens, observed the Lenten fast. The East has no equivalent to Ash Wednesday. The earliest fasts of Lent tended to be very strict, allowing one meal a day, and even then meats, eggs, and other indulgences were forbidden. The Eastern Churches follow this today. Now, in the Western Church, only Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are enjoined as strict fast days, but Fridays are set aside for abstinence from meat.*

*Sundays are not a part of the Lenten fast, because Sunday is always a feast of the resurrection. However, the Sundays of Lent are still a part of the Lenten liturgical season in the Western Church, and the worship services tend to be more simple and austere than normal. They lack the Gloria, and the joyous "alleluias" of the Easter season. The Western liturgical color of Lent is violet, symbolizing royalty and penitence. Solemnities like St. Joseph and the Annunciation, take precedence over Lenten observances in the Church calendar. These days, when they fall on Fridays, do away with Lenten abstinence requirements. However, at least in the current Western Church, Lent nearly always trumps the observances of minor feast days. Too many festivals take away from the simple and penitential spirit of the Lenten season. Certain devotions and liturgies have developed during the Lenten season, including (in the West), the Stations of the Cross.*