

Starting the Lenten Season

Shrove Tuesday 2014.

Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the ritual of shroving, when the faithful confessed their sins to the local priest and received forgiveness before the Lenten season began.



As far back as 1000 AD, "to shrive" meant to hear confessions.

Historically, Shrove Tuesday also marked the beginning of the 40-day Lenten fasting period when the faithful were forbidden by the church to consume meat, butter, eggs or milk. However, if a family had a store of these foods they all would go bad by the time the fast ended on Easter Sunday. What to do?

Solution: use up the milk, butter and eggs no later than Shrove Tuesday. And so, with the addition of a little flour, the solution quickly presented itself in... pancakes. And lots of them !!

Today, the Shrove Tuesday pancake tradition lives on throughout Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia, but is most associated with the UK where it is simply known as Pancake Tuesday with a traditional recipe, although these can be as varied in the UK as there are British households.

In France, (as well as in the US - or more famously - in New Orleans) it's known as *Fat Tuesday* which kicks off the Mardi Gras festival with wild celebrations just before the austere Lenten season.

In Sweden, Fat Tuesday translates to *Fettisdagen*, and in Lithuania it's *Uzgavens*. In Poland, traditional celebrations take place on a Thursday a week before Ash Wednesday and so it's *Tłusty Czwartek*, or Fat Thursday.

Ash Wednesday

In Western Christendom, Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and falls between February 4th and March 11th, 6 1/2 weeks before Easter. Early in Christian history the length of Lent varied, but in the 7th century it was fixed at 40 days as a reminder of the 40 days Jesus fasted in the desert. Early penitents were sprinkled with ashes, wore sackcloth, and were required to remain apart from the rest of the community until they were reconciled on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter. Ashes on Ash Wednesday:

The most obvious mark of celebrating Ash Wednesday is the blessing and application of ashes to the foreheads of those who participate as a sign of penance. By the 11th century this custom had largely disappeared and was replaced with the distribution of

ashes during the services and their application to the foreheads of all members of a congregation. Traditionally this is accompanied by "Remember you are dust and will return to dust," but today "Turn from sin and live the gospel" is often used. Ash Wednesday Today:

Christians are expected to engage in both fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday. Today only Roman Catholics continue with the tradition of applying ashes on Ash Wednesday, using the ashes created by the burning of palm fronds from the previous Palm Sunday. There are special church services on Ash Wednesday in Anglican, Lutheran, and some other Protestant churches. Eastern Orthodox churches do not observe Ash Wednesday at all because their Lent begins on a Monday, known as "Clean Monday."

What is Lent?

In the Christian liturgical calendar, Lent is the penitential period of 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Traditional Christian observances of Lent include fasting and penitence, both in preparation for Easter and as a way of spiritually "joining" Jesus with the fasting and meditation he did in the wilderness.

For early Christians and for Eastern Orthodox Christians today the rules of fasting are strict: just one meal a day, in the evening, and no meat, fish, eggs, or butter is permitted.

Origins of Lent:

The name lent is a Germanic word originally used to refer to the spring season generally. Over time, it replaced the Latin *quadragesima*, which means "forty days." Lent lasts forty days because, according to biblical accounts, Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days of fasting, meditation and reflection before beginning his ministry.

Lent Ends the day before Easter Sunday, also known as Holy Saturday. Palm Sunday marks the last week of



Lent and commemorates the day Jesus entered Jerusalem to people laying palms at his feet. However, Roman Catholics end Lent at sundown on Holy Thursday when the Mass of the Lord's Supper begins.