

Ash Wednesday

What is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is the day after Shrove Tuesday. It is the first day of Lent in the Christian calendar.

How Did It Begin?

In the Bible, it is written that Jesus Christ spent 40 days in the desert, where he fasted – didn't eat – during the day. The Devil joined him and tried to make Jesus prove that he was the Son of God. The Devil tempted Jesus with different things. Jesus never gave in.

The time of Lent lasts for 40 days, which is the same length of time Jesus was in the desert. Many Christians see this as a time to get ready for Easter, think about Jesus' time in the desert and how they might avoid the temptation to do things they should not.

What Happens on Ash Wednesday?

On Ash Wednesday, many Christians go to church. The priest will ask people to go to him and he puts ashes on their forehead. The ashes are put on in the sign of the cross. The priest will say, "repent and believe in the Gospel". This is to help people ask God for forgiveness for anything bad that they have done.

Where Do the Ashes Come From?

Traditionally, the ashes come from the palm leaves which are used in church during the Palm Sunday celebrations. After Palm Sunday, the leaves are burnt and the ashes are saved for the next year so that they can be used on Ash Wednesday.

Modern Traditions

From Ash Wednesday, people often give something up until Easter Day, such as sweets, biscuits or chocolate.

This is because these type of foods are seen as temptations and it reminds people of how Jesus fought temptation in the desert. Often, people see it as a time to do good things, like volunteer at a charity or help others in need.



Questions

1. When is Ash Wednesday? Tick **one**.

- The day after Shrove Tuesday
- The last day of Lent
- The day after Easter
- The day before Palm Sunday

2. How many days did Jesus spend in the desert?

3. Which of the following is closest to the meaning of the word fasted? Tick **one**.

- ran very fast
- didn't eat
- went on a long journey
- tempted

4. Use the information in the text to match the sentences up.

From Ash Wednesday, many Christians give up things like...

help others in need or volunteer at a charity shop.

People often do good things like...

Jesus resisted temptation in the desert.

People give up foods they like because...

biscuits, sweets or chocolate.

5. Tick the boxes to say whether the sentences are true or false.

Sentence	True	False
Ash Wednesday is the last day of Lent.		
At church, a priest will put ashes on people's foreheads.		
The ashes come from palm leaves.		
In the desert, Jesus gave in to temptation.		