Lent is a 40-day liturgical season that begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes at the Great Vigil of Easter.

Remembering the passion and death of Jesus. . .

"**Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold**" (Matthew 24:12).

"I urge the members of the Church to take up the Lenten journey with enthusiasm, sustained by almsgiving, fasting and prayer. If, at times, the flame of charity seems to die in our own hearts, know that this is never the case in the heart of God! He constantly gives us a chance to begin loving anew."

Pope Francis: MESSAGE FOR LENT 2018

Catholics striving for holiness

Prayer allows us to eradicate "secret lies" and "self-deception," and we find "the consolation God offers,"

Almsgiving frees us from greed; it helps us regard others as brothers and sisters.

Fasting "weakens our tendency to violence" reviving "our desire to obey God," who alone can satisfy our hunger.

THE SACRED HEART FOR LENT
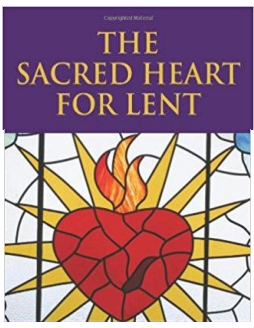
The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is at the heart of our Lenten observance, for it draws us near to Christ in the Holy Eucharist and helps us to remain in communion with Him.

"They shall look on Him Whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:3 7).

During Lent, as we look upon the image of Christ crucified, we especially gaze upon His pierced Heart, which He permitted to be opened pouring out every ounce of His being for our salvation. The glorious pierced Heart of Jesus is the source of all the graces we receive in the Church.

Lent is about being available for something greater: God and others.

Let us pray for the grace to humbly
journey together this Lent season.

The Precepts of the Church: Catholics are required to observe all days of fasting and abstinence.

The Catholic Church, in an attempt to help Catholics do at least a minimum during Lent, asks all Catholics to **fast and abstain** on certain days. **Fasting** means to limit food to one full meal a day. **Abstinence** means not eating meat.

- Catholics of 14 years of age or older are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent.
  - Catholics between the ages of 18 and 60 are also to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday opens the season to Lent. Ash Wednesday comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting. The practice includes the wearing of ashes on the head. The ashes symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the priest applies the ashes to a person's forehead, he speaks the words: *"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."* Alternatively, the priest may speak the words, *"Repent and believe in the Gospel."*

Ashes also symbolize grief. *Grief that we have sinned and caused division from God.*

We mark our foreheads with ashes to remind ourselves that **we are not of this world** and are made for **eternity with God.**

Where do the ashes come from?
The ashes are made from the **blessed palms** used in the Palm Sunday celebration of the previous year.

WHY THE ASHES?

Ashes are a public sign of our intent to **die to our worldly desires** and **live in Christ.**

As our foreheads are marked with ashes, these words are said:
"Remember, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return."

Ashes were used as a sign of repentence in the Old Testament:
"Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession"
-Daniel 9: 3-4

What are you doing for Lent?

10 IDEAS FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL LENTEN SEASON

1. Give up sin

Show your love for God by keeping his commandments. Turn away from sins.

2. Fast

An empty stomach can lead to more attentive prayer. Give the money you saved on food to others in alms.

3. Pray

Be in constant prayer. Pray for your family and friends, for those who suffer, and for the Church and the world.

4. Do good works

Help those in need. Pray for them and be ready to serve them in their time of need.

5. Give alms

Help the poor and support the good works of the Church. Give cheerfully to God who has given us everything we have.

6. Abstain

Give up meat or other desirable foods during Lent, especially on Friday, the day of Christ's saving death on the cross.

7. Do meditative reading

Nourish your faith by spending time in quiet reading and reflection. Prayerful reading of God's word each day will open your heart to the Spirit, and let God's thoughts and ways influence yours.

8. Control desire for possessions

Build up treasures in heaven rather than on earth. Cut down on material possessions, eliminate frills, lessen wants, share yourself – your time and your talents – with others.

9. Control desire for entertainment

Too much entertainment and other distractions can lead to less or no time for the works of the Lord.

10. Carry out duties in life

Serve God by living out your vocation in love each day. God is calling each of us to be a living sacrifice. Offer your daily life through Christ!