

Ash Wednesday

The Christian season of **Lent begins** with Ash Wednesday.

The date of Ash Wednesday varies each year according to the date of Easter. It is always six-and-a-half weeks before [Easter](#). The earliest possible date of Ash Wednesday is February 4 and the latest possible date is March 10.

✝ What is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. Christians use ash as a symbol of being sorry for things they have done wrong and want to get rid of forever.

✝ Why is it called Ash Wednesday?

Ashes were used in the past as a symbol of being sorry. [Christians](#) rubbed ashes on their foreheads. They wanted to show God that they were sorry for the wrong things they had done in the past year.



✝ What happens on Ash Wednesday today?

Some Christians have a tiny smudge of ashes put on their foreheads as a sign of sorrow at not having been good over the last year.

✝ What are the ashes made from?

In churches the priest first burns the palm crosses that have been kept from last year's [Palm Sunday](#) and then mixes the ashes of these crosses with holy water (which has been blessed) to make a greyish paste. When people go to church on Ash Wednesday, the priest dips his thumb in the paste and uses it to make the sign of the cross on each person's forehead.

✝ Why are last years Palm Crosses recycled?

[Palm Sunday](#) celebrates Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, so when the crosses used in the last years Palm Sunday service are converted to ashes, worshippers are reminded that defeat and crucifixion swiftly followed triumph.

✝ What do the ashes symbolise?

Using ashes to mark the cross on the believer's forehead symbolises that through Christ's death and resurrection, all Christians can be free from sin.