



What Lent Means to a Catholic in Australia

For Catholics in Australia, Lent is a profoundly significant **40 day season of repentance, renewal, and preparation for Easter**, mirroring the 40 days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert before beginning His ministry. It begins on **Ash Wednesday**, when Catholics receive ashes on their foreheads as a symbol of human mortality and a call to turn back to God. This ritual sets the spiritual tone for the weeks ahead, emphasising humility, reflection, and the need for ongoing conversion.

Central to the meaning of Lent are its **three pillars: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving**, which guide Catholics in deepening their spiritual lives. Prayer invites believers to spend more intentional time with God, through Scripture, personal reflection, or traditional devotions such as the Rosary or Eucharistic adoration. Fasting is understood not as punishment but as a way to cultivate freedom by letting go of habits or attachments that distract from God. It may include abstaining from meat on Fridays or making personal sacrifices such as reducing screen time or simplifying daily routines. Almsgiving transforms faith into action, urging Catholics to support the poor, offer kindness, and practise generosity in practical, meaningful ways.

Australian Catholic communities enrich the Lenten journey through parish life. Many parishes host the **Stations of the Cross**, a devotion that reflects on 14 moments of Christ's passion. Opportunities for reconciliation, prayer gatherings, and charitable initiatives further support spiritual growth and communal unity during the season. These practices help Catholics reflect more deeply on Jesus' suffering, love, and sacrifice.

Lent ultimately leads to **Holy Week**, the most solemn period of the liturgical year. Australian Catholics mark **Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday**, and the **Easter Vigil** as key moments that commemorate Jesus' final days, crucifixion, and resurrection. These events remind believers that Lent is not just about personal sacrifice but about journeying with Christ toward the hope and joy of Easter. The timeline of Lent, including key dates in 2026 such as Ash Wednesday on February 18 and Good Friday on April 3, highlights its role in preparing hearts for the Easter celebration.

Contemporary Australian Catholic reflections also emphasise **listening, stillness, and personal transformation** as important themes. In a world full of noise and constant activity, Lent offers a necessary pause—a return to God and rediscovery of one's identity as a beloved child of God.

Overall, Lent in Australia is a sacred journey of inner renewal. Through repentance, spiritual discipline, community life, and acts of love, Catholics prepare themselves to fully embrace the profound mystery and joy of Christ's resurrection at Easter.

22 February 2026

First Sunday of Lent
Year A

Entrance Antiphon

When he calls on me, I will answer him; I will deliver him and give him glory, I will grant him length of days.

First Reading from the book of Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Responsorial Psalm Ps 50:3-6. 12-14. 17. R. v.3 (R.) Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Second Reading from the letter to Romans 5:12-19

Gospel Acclamation
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!
No one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

Holy Gospel according to Matthew 4:1-11

Communion Antiphon
One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

Next Week
Second Sunday of Lent
Year A

First: Genesis 12:1-4
Resp Ps Ps 32:4-5. 18-20.
22. R. v.22
Second: 2 Timothy 1:8-10
Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

Mass and Devotions

Sunday Mass

Saturday Vigil: 6pm

Sunday: 9.30am & 5pm

Samoan Mass:

1st Sunday at 12 noon

Maori Mass:

1st Sunday of each month at 2pm

Filipino Mass: 3rd Sunday of each month at 11.15am

Children's Mass: 5th Sunday of the month at 9.30am

Weekday Mass

9am each day except Thursday;

Thursday at 7.30pm

Healing Mass on the 1st Saturday of each month at 9am.

Reconciliation

every Saturday at 11am

Devotions & Prayer groups

Adoration with the Rosary:

Saturday at 9.30am

Alliance of the 2 hearts Mass

& devotion: 1st Friday of each month at 7.30pm

Divine Mercy Devotion: 3rd Sunday of each month at 3pm

Faith Circles: every Monday at 2pm & 7pm via zoom

Holy Family Fellowship:

every 4th Saturday at 7pm.

Book Club: meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 10am.

Friendship Group: is on the 1st Tuesday of the Month

Bible Study & Reflection

Group: meets Monday at 10am.

Children's Ministry

Gathering will meet on the 4th Sunday from 3– 5 pm

Ascent Youth Ministry:

meets on the 2nd & 4th Friday from 6.30pm.

Parish Notices

Lenten Reflection Groups; Continuing all through Lent, there will be a lenten reflection group meeting on Monday at 10am and Tuesday at 7.30pm. All are welcome to join.

Lenten reflection booklets "Compassio" are available to purchase for \$7 each. There is also a cd and digital recording of the reflections available by calling the parish office.

Paschal Precept: Each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This is to be done between Ash Wednesday (18 February) and Trinity Sunday (31 May 2026) unless for a good reason it is done at another time during the year. All the faithful are obliged to confess their grave sins at least once a year.

Upcoming triple ordination to the diaconate for our diocese!

As Stuart, John and Ryan enter these final days of preparation, we keep them close in prayer, trusting in the Holy Spirit's guidance as they draw near to their ordination.

Prayer for the ordinandii

Heavenly Father,

we give you thanks for the gift of vocation and for the call you have placed on the lives of Stuart, John and Ryan.

As they prepare to be ordained to the diaconate, fill them with courage and trust in your presence.

Strengthen them to serve with humility, fidelity and love, after the example of your Son, who came not to be served but to serve.

Through the intercession of St Stephen, the first deacon and martyr of the Church, may they be faithful ministers of your Word, generous servants of your altar, and compassionate witnesses of charity in the world.

Keep them steadfast in prayer, gentle in service, and courageous in faith, that in all things they may glorify you and build up your Church.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our Pastoral Care Team visit people who cannot attend Mass any longer due to ill health and age. If you know anyone who would like to have a home visit and Holy Communion please call the parish office and submit the persons contact information.

Grief and Loss Support Group commencing Tuesday 10 March at

10am. Our Pastoral Care team and Grief Care are commencing a support group and hope to continue on a monthly basis for people who have experienced grief and loss in their lives and who would like an opportunity to connect with others in a gentle environment. Please come along at 10am till 12 on Tuesday 10 March.

Children's ministry gathering will meet on Sunday 22 February from 3pm for school aged children.

International Eucharistic Congress 2028 official launch on Sunday

March 1. Every parish in the country is being encouraged to hold an hour of Eucharistic Adoration following one of the Masses on Sunday 1 March 2026, the Second Sunday in Lent. Bishop Brian will be celebrating 10.30am mass and afterwards leading a Holy Hour at the Cathedral on this day. Hearing the Gospel of the Transfiguration proclaimed on that Sunday, it is hoped that we may be broadly united in prayer across the country, seeking a eucharistic transfiguration of our own lives and within our communities.

Our Parish will have a holy hour of Adoration commencing at 6pm immediately after the 5pm Mass.

Car and Bike Show on Saturday 14 March from 8am is a fundraising event for the parish and I encourage you to come along and bring your family & friends to be a part of the fun. Our fundraising team are also reaching out for some assistance on the day. We need some traffic wardens and assistance with setting up and cleaning up. It will be an opportunity for our ministries to reach out beyond the parish. Also there will be an opportunity for your ministry to set up a stall for something such as facepainting or religious sales. We need some helpers for cooking a BBQ and having a cake stall.
The next Fundraising team meeting is on Wednesday 4 March at 7.30pm

Ascent Youth Group "Ever felt like you were alone in your faith? Have questions about God & life? Come along to ASCENT Youth, on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 6:30pm in the Parish Hall! All young people aged 12–17 are invited to a fun and faith-filled evening with games, food, friendship and opportunities to grow together and explore life's big questions. Bring a friend and help us kick off 2026!

Food Sponsors: Our Parish Youth Group, Ascent Youth, is looking for parishioners to help sponsor dinner for their gatherings every 2nd and 4th Friday. As a food sponsor, you are welcome to cook, buy something for us to cook or provide a donation of \$60 for us to purchase food. You will be rostered approx 2-3 times a year and will be helping provide food for about 15 young people. Thank you to our generous existing sponsors who have helped in the past. Contact the Parish if you can join the team.

Friendship Group— on Tuesday, 3 March after the 9am Mass. The theme in March is St Patrick day. Please bring a plate to share and wear something green. For more information please contact the Parish Office.

MGL Sisters Consecrated Life Weekend: Discernment Retreat on Friday 13th March - Sunday 15th March; A time for single women aged 18-35 to listen for the voice of Jesus, ask questions and experience prayer, talks, sisterhood and sharing to help discern your vocation. More info and RSVP: mgl sisters.sydney@gmail.com 0402 602 520

Loving Well Program – Supporting Healthy Relationships CatholicCare is offering Loving Well, a new FREE four□session pilot program for anyone who has experienced relationship change and is seeking guidance, healing, and healthier ways of relating moving forward. Rooted in compassion and personal growth, the program explores understanding relationship patterns, building self□awareness, navigating life's changes, and fostering positive, healthy connections with others. Participants will also receive a small wellness pack and be entered into a draw for a \$50 movie voucher. To learn more or register, please visit CatholicCare's website: <https://tinyurl.com/392tswzb>

Prayer intentions

For the sick and homebound:

Pat Cullen, Mary Ponnappalam, Myka Mangos, Kevin Cloran, Karen Browne, Reg Gardner, Sr Heather Burke, Barry Atkins, Carol & Gabriel Gonzales, Amelia Jimenez, Susan Mella, Sean Finnerty, Rose Levoune, Doris Wahhib, John Kajdryns, Pat Stewart, Allan Marquinez, Richard Scolyer, Angela Pavlovic,

May they experience the saving power of the risen Lord amidst their pain & affliction.

For our recently departed

Shirley Wrightman

Anniversaries that occur at this time

Rita Carmel Lopresti, Anne Migus, Hilda Young, Mark Thompson

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, may perpetual light shine upon them.

Our Rosters

1 March 2026	Saturday 6pm	Sunday 9.30am	Sunday 5pm
Welcomers	Glen , Arlene & Berna	Martin , Violeti & Paul	Geoff, Margaret & Danni
Altar Servers	Andrew, Diane, Sebastian & Eliana	Vu	Robert & Nathan
Readers	Richard & Tracey	Irene & Lee	Niya & Effie
Refreshments	Josephine & Glenda	4th Sunday Choir & Karen	Fev, Maree & Patricia
Altar Linen	Margaret McD	CLOTW: Rebecca & Sarah	
Flowers	Lorraine & Effie	Church Vacuuming	Parish Office
Counters	Tess & Jeanette	Church Foyer	Parish Office



Contact Us

Parish Priest:
Fr. Shane Kelleher OCD

Parish Associate:
Sr "Jill" Girlie Sudario, CM

Office Hours

Tuesday-Friday: 9.30am-12.30pm
 Phone: 9603 7373 / 0434 705 176
 Address: 193 St Andrews Rd, Varroville
 Email: varroville@dow.org.au
 Website: varroville.dow.org.au

Holy Gospel according Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus fasted for forty days and nights.

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says:

Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these', he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.' Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

The Gospel of the Lord.



Gospel Reflection : Project Compassion

Nelson Mandela said that education was the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world. There are plenty of people who would agree with him. One of them is Oprah Winfrey who said that education was the way to move mountains, build bridges and, yes, to change the world.

Today's readings certainly suggest the value of learning. The story from the Book of Genesis comes from pre-history. It has often been misunderstood to suggest that sin entered the world through one woman. This is not true. On the contrary, the readings tell us that the world is good. When humans try to overstretch their boundaries, trouble follows, and the experience of beauty and harmony is threatened. We need to choose our teachers. Are we going to listen to God or the serpent? In our modern world, the serpent takes many forms. There are countless threats to the harmony of the human race and the beauty of our natural environment.

Likewise, today's story of the temptations in the wilderness from Matthew's Gospel shows us that some lessons are difficult. Jesus teaches the devil. He tells the evil one that God is in charge. Jesus must decide which voices he will follow. He must learn that some ideas may not be as good as they sound. All the kingdoms of the world, Jesus learns, are no substitute for an honest and life-giving relationship with God. Each week during Lent, Caritas Australia asks us to think about the world and learn more about our role in building God's kingdom. Today we start with an introduction to Project Compassion, which us to appreciate how much the Catholic community, has been able to achieve across the decades for the most marginalised people of the world. We are all still learning. Pope Leo XIV has reminded us that the vulnerable are great teachers.

In *Dilexi Te* he writes: Christians must not abandon almsgiving... It is always better at least to do something rather than nothing. Whatever form it may take, almsgiving will touch and soften our hardened hearts... for our part, we need to give alms as a way of reaching out and touching the suffering flesh of the poor.



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contact with
your Diocesan
Director



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