

Differences in Lent Between Catholics & Lutherans

<https://classroom.synonym.com/differences-in-lent-between-catholics-lutherans-12085849.html>

Along with many similarities, Catholics and Lutherans have interesting differences in their Lenten practices. The Lutheran Church split from the Catholic Church in the 16th Century, preaching the primacy of the Bible and salvation by faith alone. The Lutheran and Catholic churches remain close in doctrine, however, and Lent is in the liturgy of both churches. The main difference between the churches is Lent's authority; for Catholics, Lent is Sacred Tradition while those in the Lutheran faith observe it is a voluntary, non-Scriptural activity

Season of Lent

<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/history-of-lent.html>

The word *Lent* itself is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words *lencten*, meaning "Spring," and *lenctentid*, which literally means not only "Springtide" but also was the word for "March," the month in which the majority of Lent falls.

Lent becomes more regularized after the legalization of Christianity in A.D. 313. The Council of Nicea (325), in its disciplinary canons, noted that two provincial synods should be held each year, "one before the 40 days of Lent."

These Lenten fasting rules also evolved. Eventually, a smaller repast was allowed during the day to keep up one's strength from manual labor. Eating fish was allowed, and later eating meat was also allowed through the week except on Ash Wednesday and Friday. Dispensations were given for eating dairy products if a pious work was performed, and eventually this rule was relaxed totally. (However, the abstinence from even dairy products led to the practice of blessing Easter eggs and eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday.) [Mardi-gra and Festival

Over the years, modifications have been made to the Lenten observances, making our practices not only simple but also easy. Ash Wednesday still marks the beginning of Lent, which lasts for 40 days, not including Sundays. The present fasting and abstinence laws are very simple: On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the faithful fast (having only one full meal a day and smaller snacks to keep up one's strength) and abstain from meat; on the other Fridays of Lent, the faithful abstain from meat. People are still encouraged "to give up something" for Lent as a sacrifice. (An interesting note is that technically on Sundays and solemnities like St. Joseph's Day (March 19) and the Annunciation (March 25), one is exempt and can partake of whatever has been offered up for Lent.

In both churches, Lent is the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter, the holiest day of the year that marks the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The period is marked by solemnity and contemplation. Christians typically fast and sacrifice certain things during this time in preparation for Easter. The word "alleluia," which is a joyful exclamation, is taken out of the

liturgy of both churches during this period. In some regions, Lent is preceded by unscriptural festivals, such as the widely known celebration of Mardi Gras in New Orleans and the popular Carnival in Brazil that are held on the day before Ash Wednesday when Lent commences.

Lent in the Catechism

The Catholic Catechism, which is an official summary of Catholic beliefs, compares the 40 days of Lent to the 40 days in which Jesus was tested in the desert. The Catechism views Lent as an opportunity for believers to work on their spiritual lives. Lent is particularly appropriate for engaging in spiritual exercises, penitence, pilgrimages, fasting, alms giving, charity and missionary work. The Catholic Church continues to emphasize Friday, in particular, as a time for fasting, abstaining from meat and self-denial.

Lent in the Book of Concord

The Book of Concord contains the Lutheran Confessions, which are the doctrinal statements of the Lutheran Church. The articles were presented to Catholic theologians in 1530 to explain the beliefs of Lutherans. The word "Lent" is only mentioned one time in the Book of Concord -- in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XV part 42 -- and it emphasizes giving sermons year-round instead of just during Lent. In the Lutheran faith, much emphasis is given to scripture and liturgy during the Lenten season. Acts of grace, such as helping the elderly, are also encouraged.

Major Differences

For Catholics, Lent is an obligatory Sacred Tradition. For Lutherans, who do not hold anything holy outside of Scripture, the season of Lent is observed, but fasting and penance are not viewed as compulsory. Therefore, Lutherans may voluntarily choose to fast during Lent, whereas Catholics are expected to do so. Theologian Martin Luther wanted to retain Lentan observation because it reminds Christians of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for man's sins. Aside from Lent's authority, most differences between the two churches are cultural. Catholics often refrain from eating meat on Friday during Lent, but this is not common among Lutherans. Also, Catholics put more emphasis on the Lenten tradition of reciting the Stations of the Cross that depict the suffering of Jesus in the hours preceding his crucifixion.

A Short Version of the Long History of Lent

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<https://groundwork.reframemedia.com/blog/a-short-version-of-the-long-history-of-lent>

[edited]....Considering the excesses of the Catholic Church in the years leading up to the explosion of the Reformation, the reformers' wariness of works-based, or showy, practices is understandable. Luther, Calvin, and many other reformers, confronted many notions of the Catholic Church, such as the selling of indulgences, Purgatory, the Virgin Mary, the Pope, and the intercession of the saints. They relied upon the scriptures alone to understand God's plan of salvation. For many of them and their progeny in the faith, Lent smacked of righteousness by works.

As evangelicalism rose in the 18th and 19th centuries, the biblical critique of Lent sharpened. The great evangelist Charles Spurgeon summed up the evangelical distrust of Lent with these [words from 1885](#): "It is as much our duty to reject the traditions of men, as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. We ask concerning every rite and rubric, 'Is this a law of the God of Jacob?' and if it be not clearly so, it is of no authority with us, who walk in Christian liberty."

Lent in More Recent Days and a Renewal Among Evangelicals

Lent continued to evolve in practice in the centuries following the Reformation. In the Lutheran Church, Lent remained an important part of the lectionary, but was fully voluntary with regard to individual observance, whereas in the Catholic Church it remained a "Sacred Tradition," with the force of church law behind it.

But over the years, Lent has become less strict in almost every western tradition. In the Catholic Church, for example, the number of obligatory fasting days decreased incrementally from six days a week to three, and then eventually, to just two in the whole season of Lent: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The well known "fish on Friday" tradition began in the United States in 1966 when the Pope affirmed the abstinence from "flesh" on Fridays. In every tradition, however, the act of "giving something up" has remained strong. For all of these changes, though, the tradition of Lent is still largely recognizable to what it was nearly 2,000 years ago.

In recent years, Lent has resurged in importance among mainline Protestant churches and has even seen [renewal among evangelicals](#). In a time that some call the "post-Christian era," many evangelicals have gained a new appreciation for the Church Liturgical Calendar, and for a season to reflect on their need for the cross and to prepare their hearts to celebrate Christ's resurrection. For all faithful observers, Lent is about Jesus and what he did. "You could observe 1,000 Lents," says Eric Ferris, founder of the [Lent Experience](#), "and it won't ever accomplish in your life what the cross of Jesus has." Whether Christians observe Lent or not, what really matters is our embrace of Christ crucified and the empty tomb.