

## Shrove Tuesday 13th February:

Shrove Tuesday is the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday which is the first day of Lent. It's a day of penitence, to clean the soul, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. But there's more to Shrove Tuesday than pigging out on pancakes or taking part in a public pancake race. The pancakes themselves are part of an ancient custom with deeply religious roots.

### Penitence:

Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the ritual of shriving that Christians used to undergo in the past. In shriving, a person confesses their sins and receives absolution for them. When a person receives absolution for their sins, they are forgiven for them and released from the guilt and pain that they have caused them. In the Catholic or Orthodox context, the absolution is pronounced by a priest. This tradition is very old. Over 1000 years ago a monk wrote in the Anglo-Saxon Ecclesiastical Institutes: In the week immediately before Lent everyone shall go to his confessor and confess his deeds and the confessor shall so shrive him.

### Shrove Tuesday celebrations:

Shrove Tuesday is a day of celebration as well as penitence, because it's the last day before Lent. Lent is a time of abstinence, of giving things up. So Shrove Tuesday is the last chance to indulge yourself, and to use up the foods that aren't allowed in Lent. Giving up foods: but not wasting them. In the old days there were many foods that observant Christians would not eat during Lent: foods such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. So that no food was wasted, families would have a feast on the shriving Tuesday, and eat up all the foods that wouldn't last the forty days of Lent without going off.

The need to eat up the fats gave rise to the French name Mardi Gras; meaning fat Tuesday. Pancakes became associated with Shrove Tuesday as they were a dish that could use up all the eggs, fats and milk in the house with just the addition of flour.

The pancake has a very long history and featured in cookery books as far back as 1439. The tradition of tossing or flipping them is almost as old.

In the UK, pancake races form an important part of the Shrove Tuesday celebrations – an opportunity for large numbers of people, often in fancy dress, to race down streets tossing pancakes. The object of the race is to get to the finishing line first, carrying a frying pan with a cooked pancake in it and flipping the pancake as you run.

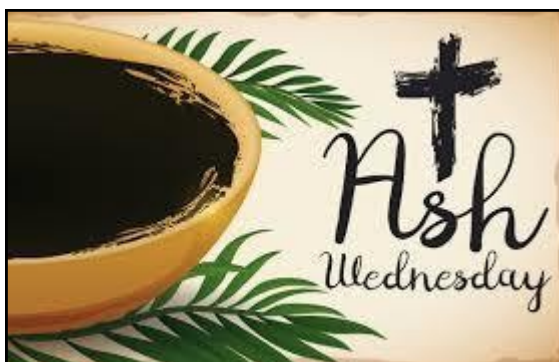
**“And every man and  
maide doe take their  
turne, And tosse their  
Pancakes up for feare  
they burne.”**

Pasquil's Palin, 1619

## Ash Wednesday February 14th:

Ash Wednesday is a Christian holy day of prayer and fasting. It is preceded by Shrove Tuesday and falls on the first day of Lent, the six weeks of penitence before Easter.

Ash Wednesday derives its name from the placing of repentance ashes on the foreheads of participants to either the words "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" or the dictum "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The ashes are prepared by burning palm leaves from the previous Palm Sunday celebrations.



Along with reminding us of our mortality, the ashes on Ash Wednesday are also symbolic of grief; grief from the sins we have committed. We may not always be able to resist temptation as Jesus did, but Lent provides an opportunity to reflect, pray and repent for our sins. In doing so, many people make sacrifices or commit to life changes throughout the 40 days of lent. It's a time for spiritual fasting so that we can cleanse our souls and renew our faith as we prepare for the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday.

## Valentine's Day—February 14th



### St. Valentine's Story

Let me introduce myself. My name is Valentine. I lived in Rome during the third century. That was long, long ago! At that time, Rome was ruled by an emperor named Claudius. I didn't like Emperor Claudius, and I wasn't the only one! A lot of people shared my feelings.

Claudius wanted to have a big army. He expected men to volunteer to join. Many men just did not want to fight in wars. They did not want to leave their wives and families. As you might have guessed, not many men signed up. This made Claudius furious. So what happened? He had a crazy idea. He thought that if men were not married, they would not mind joining the army. So Claudius decided not to allow any more marriages. Young people thought his new law was cruel. I thought it was preposterous! I certainly wasn't going to support that law!

Did I mention that I was a priest? One of my favourite activities was to marry couples. Even after Emperor Claudius passed his law, I kept on performing marriage ceremonies -- secretly, of course. It was really quite exciting. Imagine a small candlelit room with only the bride and groom and myself. We would whisper the words of the ceremony, listening all the while for the steps of soldiers.

One night, we did hear footsteps. It was scary! Thank goodness the couple I was marrying escaped in time. I was caught. (Not quite as light on my feet as I used to be, I guess.) I was thrown in jail and told that my punishment was death.

I tried to stay cheerful. And do you know what? Wonderful things happened. Many young people came to the jail to visit me. They threw flowers and notes up to my window. They wanted me to know that they, too, believed in love.

One of these young people was the daughter of the prison guard. Her father allowed her to visit me in the cell. Sometimes we would sit and talk for hours. She helped me to keep my spirits up. She agreed that I did the right thing by ignoring the Emperor and going ahead with the secret marriages. On the day I was to die, I left my friend a little note thanking her for her friendship and loyalty. I signed it, "Love from your Valentine."

I believe that note started the custom of exchanging love messages on Valentine's Day. It was written on the day I died, February 14, 269 A.D. Now, every year on this day, people remember. But most importantly, they think about love and friendship. And when they think of Emperor Claudius, they remember how he tried to stand in the way of love, and they laugh -- because they know that love can't be beaten!

## God's Valentine

For God so lo**V**ed the world  
that He g**A**ve  
His on**L**y  
begott**E**n  
So **N**  
tha**T** whoever  
believes **I**n Him  
should **N**ot perish  
but have **E**ternal life

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## Love is patient, love is kind.

Love does not envy,  
is not boastful,  
is not arrogant, is not rude,  
is not self-seeking,  
is not irritable, and does  
not keep a record of wrongs.

Love finds no joy  
in unrighteousness  
but rejoices in the truth.

It bears all things,  
believes all things,  
hopes all things,  
endures all things.  
*Love never ends.*

-1 Corinthians 13:4-8  
BibleVerseImages.com

## Lent:

Lent is a significant season in the year for Christians – a time of solemnity and self-reflection where they confess their failings and resolve to live a more godly life based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. It lasts for just over six weeks leading up to Easter.

Traditionally it was a time of fasting from certain foods such as eggs, meat, fish and fats. Nowadays people might give up a luxury food – such as chocolate. They may also give up an activity such as using social media or drinking alcohol.

It is called Lent in English because it is the time of the year when days are lengthening in the northern hemisphere. Like Easter, Lent falls on different dates each year. Christians in different church traditions around the world celebrate slightly different periods of Lent. Some church buildings are made to look more plain during Lent with flowers and other decorations removed.



## Lenten Lilies:

In England eleven 'Lent' names have been recorded for daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*). Most of these seem to simply relate to the plant flowering during the Lenten period, the 40 days before Easter, the most widespread of such names being Lent lilies.

According to Gabrielle Hatfield, in her *Hatfield's Flora* (2007), this name was used in Elizabethan times (1558-1603) by Cheapside (London) market women who would carry baskets of daffodils on their heads offering them for sale.

Another name given by James Britten and Robert Holland in their *Dictionary of English Plant-names* (1886), is Lent-cocks, recorded from Devon. This they explain by referring to the *Gardeners' Chronicle* of 22 March 1879: 'In allusion, it seems, to the barbarous custom of cock-throwing, which was prescribed by our forefathers for Lent, or rather for Shrove Tuesday. The boys, in the absence of live cocks to throw sticks at, practised the art of decapitation on the flower'.



## Legend Of The Daffodil

### Lenten Lily

Little trumpet golden hue,  
Leaves upraised in praise unto,  
Christ who died on Calvary's tree,  
Sacrificed himself for me.

Legends say that throughout lent,  
Whispers heavenward are sent.  
Of good deeds done, prayers, sacrifice,  
Acts of kindness, all things nice.

Guardian angles on hearing this,  
Pluck golden stars and with a kiss,  
Blow them down to earth below,  
Where they bloom there in a row.

Little star shaped trumpet flower,  
First appeared in sorrow's hour.

In Gethsemane they grew,  
To comfort Christ our Saviour who,  
Wept alone and prayed that night,  
As He faced His sorrowful plight.

A sign of hope and new birth,  
Their tender blossoms kissed the earth.  
With star shaped centres, leaves upraised,  
Tis' Easter's symbol, nature's praise.

Daffodils born during lent.  
Are "Lenten Lily's", Heaven sent.  
Their leaves upturned in praise unto,  
Christ who gave Himself for you.

*Dot McGinnis*

