



## What does Lent mean?

While we associate Lent with preparation for Easter, the word **'Lent'** actually comes from the Anglo-Saxon word **Lencten**, meaning **'spring'**. That might seem strange at first but when we think about it there is an obvious connection between spring and our preparation for Easter. While the images of spring may be of blooming flowers, spring lambs and lengthening, warmer days, none of this is instantaneous. It is a slow process of **change, growth and new beginnings** as nature turns away from the cold and harshness of winter towards the warmth and light of spring.

Our journey in Lent is a bit like that, offering us an annual opportunity, in the light and warmth of our faith, for change, growth and new beginnings. Every spring, every Lent holds the promise of a fresh start and new life; this is a time when we can honestly look at our lives and take even the simplest of steps **to turn back to and deepen our relationship with God** and allow our faith to impact who we are in the world.

In other languages the word Lent comes from the Latin, **Quadragesima** – a period of **40 days**. In the Christian tradition the forty days is understood to refer to a time of intense prayer and preparation; we remember the biblical stories of Noah and the flood of forty days, the forty years the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness and, primarily, we remember Christ's forty day fast in preparation for his ministry. Lent is our forty days of preparation to renew our baptism at Easter and to put ourselves back on track to live the life our baptism calls us to live in the everyday circumstances we find ourselves.

Lent, then, is a time of doing penance, of actively embracing the Lenten disciplines of **prayer, fasting and almsgiving**. None of these are ends in themselves, they are all part of the process that leads us back to God.