

Why Do Catholics Have 40 Days of Lent?



Catholics have 40 days of Lent because Jesus went into the desert for 40 days. 40 is a significant number in the Old Testament too.

It rained for 40 days when Noah was in the ark. ([Genesis 7:12](#))

Moses was on Sinai for 40 days receiving the Ten Commandments and the law from God. ([Exodus 34: 28 – 29](#))

The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years after they were freed from bondage in Egypt and were heading for the “promised land.” ([Joshua 5:6](#))

The prophet Elijah did a 40 day fast. ([1 Kings 19:7-9](#))

Jesus was “thrust” into the desert by the Holy Spirit for 40 days to fast and be tempted by Satan. ([Matthew 4:1](#))

So it makes sense for us to give up chocolate for 40 days . . . right? Where’s the connection? There’s something common with all these stories – they’re all a prelude to something new and awesome happening. Those 40 days (or years) prepared Noah, Moses, the Israelites, Elijah, and Jesus for the next part of God’s plan. **It was a time of training and strengthening.**

That’s what the liturgical season of Lent is for us. It’s **40 days of preparation and purification before Easter**. Easter is the time that we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and our “new life” in Christ.

It’s a great time to pray about where we need to be “made new” in our lives. We discipline ourselves during Lent for 40 days so that at Easter we can celebrate not only Christ’s victory, but our victory in taking one step closer to sainthood.