S**hrove Tuesday**

The name Shrove comes from the old word "shrive" which means to confess. Long ago on Shrove Tuesday people used to confess their sins so that they were forgiven before the season of Lent began.

For centuries, the English have celebrated Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent, with joy and antics and great quantities of pancakes. In fact, the pancakes became so important to the holiday that it has also been called Pancake Day, or Pancake Tuesday.

Long ago, strict Lenten rules did not allow the eating of dairy products, so housewives made pancakes to use up their supplies of eggs, milk, butter and other fats.

The rich pancakes were eaten as a symbol of self-indulgence before the fast.

Even the church bells that rang early on Shrove Tuesday morning summoning everyone to confession and to be "shriven" became known as Pancake Bells. They also reminded all to use up the "forbidden foods" before Lent.

**Ash Wednesday**

Lent is the Church’s time of preparation for Easter.

We remember and celebrate the risen Christ.

Lent is the season of the Church when we purify our lives from sin by **prayer, fasting and almsgiving**.

The colour of Lent is violet.

Lent is traditionally the season of preparation for Baptism.

The word ‘lent’ comes from the northern hemisphere where it means ‘springtime’. In the southern hemisphere Lent moves through autumn when the trees are losing their leaves. We try also to ‘let go’ of some things.

Lent is a ‘journey’ of 40 days. 40 is very significant in the Bible. Jesus’ 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, Moses and Elijah fasted for 40 days; the great flood lasted 40 days and nights; Israel journeyed through the wilderness for 40 years. 40 means that something very significant is happening.

### Why We Receive the Ashes

Ashes are a symbol of penance made sacramental by the blessing of the Church, and they help us develop a spirit of humility and sacrifice.

### The Ashes

The ashes are made from the blessed palms used in the Palm Sunday celebration of the previous year. The ashes are christened with Holy Water and are scented by exposure to incense.

While the ashes symbolize penance and contrition, they are also a reminder that God is gracious and merciful to those who call on Him with repentant hearts. His Divine mercy is of utmost importance during the season of Lent, and the Church calls on us to seek that mercy during the entire Lenten season with reflection, prayer and penance.