

Easter

Easter is one of the most important holidays for Christians, as it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ following his crucifixion. For Western Christian observers, the season of Lent begins on **February 18th** in 2026. For many observers Lent ends on Easter Sunday, which falls on **April 5th**. Lent, also known as Lenten, Great Lent, or the Great Fast, is a period where certain Christian groups remember the events leading up to the death of Jesus. This begins the Easter season, which runs until Pentecost on **May 24th**. Individual adherents may use different dates to mark the end of Lent, including Holy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter) or Palm Sunday (a week before Easter). It is important for employers to keep in mind that their employees may consider different dates to be part of the Lenten or Easter seasons.

It is also important to remember that Easter and the other holidays associated with it usually fall on different dates for Western and Eastern Orthodox observers. This occurs in part because the West uses the Gregorian calendar, and the Orthodox Church uses the Julian calendar. This tip sheet will use the dates observed in the West unless otherwise specified. In 2026, Orthodox Christian Easter is on **April 12th**.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday takes place 40 days before Easter and is often commemorated by special church services. It can fall anywhere between February and March, so managers should be alert and check its date each year. In 2026, Ash Wednesday falls on **February 18th**. Many traditions and denominations—Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and others—hold special services on Ash Wednesday in which worshippers are marked on their foreheads with ashes in the shape of a cross. Employees may stop by an early morning church service before going to work, leaving ash on their foreheads during the work day. It is important for managers and co-workers to be respectful of this practice.

Lent

Lent is the period of 40 days before Easter and begins with Ash Wednesday, on **February 18th in 2026**. Christians who observe seek to experience in their own lives Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. Many people decide to give up something of importance during this period.

Holy Thursday

Holy Thursday, also known as Maundy Thursday, is the Thursday before Easter. It commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Holy Thursday is most commonly observed by Catholics, who may request a part or full day off from work in order to attend a special Holy Thursday Mass. In 2026, Holy Thursday falls on **April 2nd**.

Good Friday

Good Friday is the Friday before Easter. It commemorates the day Jesus Christ was executed by crucifixion. It is a day of mourning for many Christians, who often attend special Good Friday church services. In 2026, Good Friday falls on **April 3rd**. Observant employees may request a part or full day off from work.

Easter Sunday

Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ following his crucifixion. While Lent is a time of sacrifice and remembrance, Easter is a holiday of celebration and joy. The date of Easter changes each year and typically differs between Western and Eastern Orthodox Churches. In 2026, Easter Sunday falls on **April 5th** for Western Christian observers and on **April 12th** for Eastern Orthodox observers.

Dietary Restrictions & Fasting

Lent can be marked by refraining from food, festivities, and certain daily activities (some people may for instance stop watching television or playing video games). Some Christians fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday while others give up a particular vice, such as a favorite snack food, to strengthen self-discipline and symbolize Jesus' deprivation in the wilderness. As an alternative to giving something up, some Christians add a Lenten discipline, such as feeding people at homeless shelters or otherwise challenging themselves to do something positive. It is important to be aware of Christian employees who are observing Lent when scheduling events where food may be present.

Scheduling

Churches hold special services on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Christian employees may request time off work to attend these services. Some employees also observe Easter Monday and may request time off for this observance. Invite your employees to share how they personally observe Easter and the 40 days of Lent.

2026 Important Easter & Lent Dates

- Orthodox (Eastern)
 - Lent: February 23rd – April 4th
 - Easter: April 12th
- Gregorian (Western)
 - Mardi Gras/Fat Tuesday/Shrove Tuesday: February 17th
 - Ash Wednesday: February 18th
 - Lent: February 18th – April 2nd

- Good Friday: April 3rd
- Easter: April 5th

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