

Over-Egging It?

I was standing in the checkout queue at Tesco on Boxing Day morning when I felt something light fluttering past my head. It was part of the Christmas decorations that a member of staff was taking down! Then I read that the Co-op had started selling Easter eggs. I know Easter is early this year (1st April), but what happened to the Twelve Days of Christmas?

The date for Easter Day means that Ash Wednesday falls on 14th February (St Valentine's Day). The last time that happened was in 1956. It will happen again in 2024 and 2029, and then not again in the 21st century.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, the period of 40 days' spiritual discipline suggested by the time Jesus spent in the wilderness. In the early centuries, this was observed by a strict fast (Sundays were exempt on the traditional grounds that Sunday was never a fast day.) Only one meal a day, taken towards evening, was allowed, and flesh-meat and fish, and in most places also eggs and dairy products, were absolutely forbidden. In the Western Church, this was gradually relaxed during the second millennium.

In more recent times, Lent has been generally observed as a time of penance by abstaining from festivities, by charitable acts and by devoting more than usual time to religious exercises. However, many people today, both believers and non-believers, still choose to forgo some items of food or drink for the period of Lent. In doing so, they are following a long and valued tradition. God bless,

Don Firth