



The Lenten journey from the ashes of death to resurrected life begins on the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, which signifies a time to turn around, to change directions, to repent. This first day of Lent reminds us that unless we are willing to die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our sinfulness, individually and corporately. This is symbolized through the imposition of ashes — placing a cross on one’s forehead. During the imposition of ashes these words may be spoken: “Repent and believe the Gospel.” We are to remember that it is through the cross of Christ that we receive forgiveness of our sins and newness of life (Acts 26:18).

Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one’s faith. The ashes are a reminder of our sinfulness before God and our need for a Savior.

Trusting in the “accomplished fact” of Christ’s resurrection, we listen for the Word of God spoken to us. We follow Jesus into the wilderness, learn of His resistance to temptation, His fasting and reliance upon God’s Word, and His proceeding “on the way” to Jerusalem and the cross. Our Lenten journey is one of repenting (turning around), of changing directions from self-serving toward the self-giving way of the cross.

Welcome to Ash Wednesday at Home

Below you’ll find a simplified liturgy of a traditional Ash Wednesday service which you can do with you family and friends at home! The liturgy is adapted from the United Methodist Book of Worship.

INVITATION TO A HOLY LENT

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: the early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to participation in the life of the Church. In this way the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith.

We invite you, therefore, in the name of the Jesus Christ, to observe a holy season of Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer and fasting; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

Responsive Invocation:

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Participants: And also with you.

Leader: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

Participants: God's mercy endures forever and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Pray together:

O God, maker of everything and judge of all that You have made, from the dust of the earth You have formed us and from the dust of death You would raise us up. By the redemptive power of the cross, create in us clean hearts and put within us a new spirit, that we may repent of our sins and lead lives worthy of your calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit: one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lectionary Readings for Ash Wednesday:

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

CONFESSION

Pray together in unison Psalm 51: 1-17 followed by a time of silent personal confession in which you write on a separate piece of paper your sins before God. This list is "for your eyes only" and will be immediately burned in a pan to create your ashes.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND THANKSGIVING OVER THE ASHES

Merciful and Loving Father, we thank you that you love us unconditionally and do not desire that any of us perish, but have everlasting life. We thank you that when we confess our sins before you, you not only forgive us but you also cleanse us from all unrighteousness so that we are a new creation in Christ, the old has gone, and the new has come. May these ashes represent for us our dying to sin and now living for you. In the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Dip a thumb in the ashes and make a cross on the forehead of each person. As you make the sign of the cross, say:

Repent, and believe the Gospel that Jesus Christ died for your sins so that you might live for Him.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord God through the power of your Holy Spirit help us in the days ahead to overcome our temptations and throw off those things which encumber us and weigh us down. Create in us clean hearts and renew our spirits and give us peace. Amen.

BLESSING:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit," (Rom. 15:13).