

Ash Wednesday At Home



Lent Begins Ash Wednesday

"Receiving ashes is an outward sign of an inner step, a movement of the heart towards our beloved Lord. This year I invite you to concentrate much more on this inner, spiritual movement than on its outward manifestation in the imposition of ashes.

My suggestion is this: celebrate Ash Wednesday at home, with your family, in the household or 'support bubble' of which you are a part. Gather for a while. Read the prayer which I offer. Bless each other by making the sign of the cross on each other's forehead. Spent some time praying in a way that you know. But please, make this a prayer of your heart for God's mercy upon this world struggling to cope with the terrible pandemic and the devastation it is bringing."

(Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Pastoral Letter, 13th/14th February 2021)

Gather together and start with the Sign of the Cross.

Read and reflect on the Gospel for today:

Gospel Reading

Matthew 6:1-6,16-18

Your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

Pray together:

Lord God, with all our hearts we beseech you:

have mercy on your people;

spare your people;

strengthen all people in the struggle against the havoc of this pandemic.

Lord our God, without you we are so weak
and our courage so limited.

Give us your strength;

give us your love;
give us wisdom and skill to continue this fight.
Spare your people, O Lord we pray.
Comfort those who mourn
and gather into your kingdom all who have died.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord,
who died and rose to life,
who lives and reigns with you, for ever and ever. Amen.'

Signing each other's foreheads

Make the Sign of the Cross on each other's forehead, using one of these sets of words:

'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return'.

Or:

'Repent, and believe in the Gospel'

Intercessions

Pray together:

Our Father....

Hail Mary...

*Each person adds their own prayer or intention
or have a period of silence*

Conclude with

'Glory be to the Father...'

Conclusion

Give each other a sign of peace.

Other Prayers for Ash Wednesday...

Collect (from the Mass for Ash Wednesday)

Let us pray.

*Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting
this campaign of Christian service,*

*so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils,
we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.*

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

*who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.*

Amen.

Lord, it feels like we are embarking on a Lenten journey together, you and I. I want to remember how much I need you in my life and how much my life needs redemption. I want to remember it clearly and in the background of my day today and all through Lent.

On this special day, Ash Wednesday, may my small sacrifices in fasting be a way to clear away the clutter in my life to see you more clearly. May my longing for meat and other food, help me to focus my life today more outside myself. Let me be aware of those who are in so much more suffering than I am and may I be aware of them as the brothers and sisters you have placed in my life. Lord, I know there is darkness within me and around me.

Bless these days with your Word. Let your Light shine in the darkness. Help me long for that Light until we celebrate it at the Vigil six weeks from now. And most of all Lord, help me to honour this day with the ashes on my forehead, or the sign of your cross. They help me remember where I have come from and where I am going. May I acknowledge to you my sins and my deep need for your loving forgiveness and grace. I pray that this Lenten season will make me so much more aware of how much I need your healing in my life.

Adapted from 'One Prayer A Day for Lent',

<https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/Daily-prayers-00.html>