

Home Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

Introduction: The Hebrew people of the Old Testament understood that human life was short, and that all persons eventually would become sick, grow old and die. They knew their lives were like the grass that grew in the fields and then faded away. They remembered that they were children of Adam and Eve. God made Adam and Eve from the dust of the earth and breathed His own life into them, and cared for them like a good Father, holding them in the palm of His hand. When they lived by God's laws, they knew they would always be happy. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their life wasn't easy. They had to work hard, and eventually they died. When Hebrew people disobeyed God, persons called prophets called them to repent, to turn away from their sin, and to have a change of heart. The people would put on clothes made from rough cloth, cover their heads with ashes; they would fast and pray for God's mercy.

Ash Wednesday begins our forty day season of Lent that leads to Easter. On Ash Wednesday, we come together like the people of the Old Testament to remind ourselves that we don't always follow God's ways and need to ask God for His mercy and forgiveness. Like God's people in the time of the prophets, we wear ashes to show that we want to turn away from whatever keeps us from God, and to have a change of heart, so that we can live in right relationship with God and each other.

Confession & Pardon: I confess to almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts, and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do. And I ask to pray for me to the Lord, our God. May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Sing or Read *Just As I Am*:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt;
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot;
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind;
Yes, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Bless the Ashes: Lord our God, we ask you to bless these ashes, symbol of our desire to turn away from sin, and to follow Jesus your Son. May your Holy Spirit give us the strength to pray, do good works and make sacrifices this holy season of Lent, as we joyfully wait to meet Jesus, risen from the dead, at Easter. We make this prayer to you in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Imposition of Ashes: Take turns rubbing ashes on one another's forehead in the shape of a cross while saying: Turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel.

Final Blessing: God our Father, you formed us from the dust of the earth and brought us to new life in Christ through the waters of baptism. We ask you to change our hearts as we journey through these forty days of Lent. Help us to see Jesus in everyone we meet, and to serve him in all persons, especially the poor, the sick and the lonely. By your grace, may our prayers and sacrifices this Lent help us grow closer to each another and to you, as one family in Jesus. We make this prayer to you in His name. Amen.

