

DIOCESE OF OSSORY



# Lent Resources for Ash Wednesday



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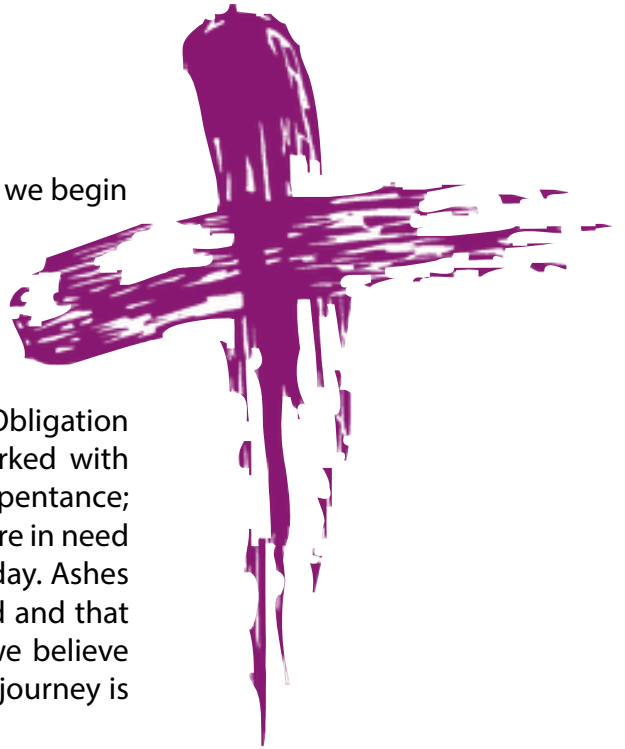
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# ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. On this day we begin our Lenten journey to Easter. It is one of two fast days in the church year.

On Ash Wednesday the priest blesses the ashes. These ashes are made from the palms which were blessed on Palm Sunday last year. Ash Wednesday is not a Holy Day of Obligation but many people attend church on this day to be marked with the sign of the cross. Ashes are an ancient symbol of repentance; penitents wore 'sackcloth and ashes' to show that they were in need of forgiveness and that term is still in common usage today. Ashes also remind us that our life on earth will come to an end and that our eternal life with God will then begin. This is what we believe happens in baptism and so the beginning of our Lenten journey is inextricably linked to our baptismal journey.



The sign of the cross is made as the ashes are put on our foreheads. The priest or the minister says 'turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel,' or similar words. The signing with ashes reminds us of our dying to the old way of life in baptism and challenges us to live our lives in the light of faith.

## PREPARING A SERVICE OF ASHES

What follows is offered as a suggestion to parishes for a short service of ashes. It could be used to facilitate people to receive ashes who otherwise may not have the opportunity to do so: for example, people limited to a lunch break, people dropping their children to school, factory shift workers.... It could take place in a church, school prayer room or other suitable setting.

This service can be led by an ordained minister or by a delegated lay minister. The actual blessing of ashes, which can be done ahead of this service, is always reserved to the ordained. Lay ministers may assist in the distribution of ashes. Because of the nature of this service it is recommended that the ashes used have been already blessed during an earlier parish celebration of the Eucharist.

This service is not offered as a replacement for a parish Eucharistic celebration of distribution of ashes but as an additional opportunity to distribute ashes to the wider community.

# Ash Wednesday Service



## INTRODUCTION

The cross of Ashes that is placed on your forehead on this special day is a sign for everyone to see that you are willing to repent and believe the Good News. These ashes were once the palms of Palm Sunday so they are also ashes of hope. We take them too, to remind ourselves that we are part of God's creation. We are made by God, for life, as is the earth and its dust.

Pope Benedict speaks of our cosmic story when he says that "you and I are made up of ashes of dead stars, that we are as it were, cosmic dust in a state of consciousness."

## OPENING HYMN

Come Worship the Lord (Michael Talbot)

## OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, you give us life and all of the wonders of creation. Sometimes we sin and turn away from your love. Help us to remember today that even when we do this that you are always with us. As we wear these ashes help us to feel your healing, forgiving presence. Amen

## SACRED SPACE

- Reader 1        As we start our Lenten journey, we place a Bible in our Sacred Space. May what we read in these sacred scriptures be stepping stones for us this Lent.
- Reader 2        As we start our Lenten journey, we place Holy Water in our Sacred Space. This water reminds us of our baptism and God's overflowing love for us.
- Reader 3        As we begin our Lenten journey we place a cross in our Sacred Space which reminds us that God sent his only son to earth to die for us and to show us how to live by his example.
- Reader 4        As we start our Lenten journey, we place a list of our Lenten promises in our Sacred Space. We have made these promises so that we will try to be better people who are growing ever closer to God.
- Reader 5        We place a candle in our Sacred Space which we light as a reminder that God is the Light of the world and is always with us.

## GOSPEL READING

### DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

#### **Leader**

If you are ready to carry the Good News of Jesus to everyone that you know, come forward to receive the ashes on your forehead,

"Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" is said as the ashes are distributed to each person

### CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, as we wear these ashes today help us to remember that you always love us. Help us not to be too busy to feel you with us in our daily lives. Make us a forgiving, healing community. Help us to turn away from things that take us away from your love. Amen

### CLOSING HYMN

What So Ever You Do