

Ash Wednesday 2021 A Resource for Families

Introduction

On Ash Wednesday, we begin again our Lenten journey of renewal and conversion. On this day we traditionally had our foreheads marked with ashes in the sign of the Cross with the words: *'Dust you are and into dust you shall return'*

Pope Francis, reflecting on the ashes traditionally imposed on our foreheads at the start of Lent, said: *"We are dust in the universe. Yet we are dust loved by God."* The Holy Father added that we are precious dust that is destined for eternal life. He described Lent as a time of grace during which we can change our lives by letting God gaze upon us with love.

We pray for God's grace this Lent to respond to his loving invitation, the call to repent. In returning to the Father, we experience the deep compassion of God that compels us too, to be compassionate to others.

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Prayer

Lord, as we begin this holy season of Lent, grant us a change of heart that we might turn away from sin and follow your Son's Gospel. By your grace, may our lives become more deeply rooted in prayer, self-sacrifice and a willingness to share. Let us walk with you this Lent as we face our own limitations and seek to be your presence in the world. Create in us clean hearts that we might know, love, and serve you better through our service of others.

Amen.

Scripture

'Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent.

(Joel 2:12.16)

And the Lord said: I will give you a new heart, and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts, and giving you hearts of love. I will put my spirit within you, and make you live by my ways, careful to observe my decrees. (Ezekiel 36: 26-27)

Reflection

Pope Francis reminds us if we allow ourselves to be shaped by the hands of God, we become - *"something wonderful, since we are the dust of the earth, upon which God has poured out his heaven, the dust that contains his dreams. We are God's hope, his treasure and his glory."* Sin wounds us, our relationship with each other and ultimately with God. Sin leads us into darkness, sorrow, desolation and isolation from those whom we love most. It is in this darkness and isolation that God reaches out to us from the abundance of his love. Lent is a period to return home to the Father and live deeply a new life of love and oneness with God.



**'Lord, I will turn my face towards you.
I will lay before you the desert areas I hide
And turn to soak in
your refreshing words of life
I will cast aside the
barren, selfish pursuits
And turn to rest in
the tranquil warmth of your love.
I will draw back from
the harsh pull of media
And turn to bathe in the gentle power of your Spirit.
Lord, today I turn my face towards you.'** (*abridged Lenten prayer poem*)
Lenten Litany (adapted)

Heavenly Father, this Lent we ask your grace -
To fast from judging others and feast on what makes them special,
To fast from unkind words and feast on kindness,
To fast from jealousy and feast on offering compliments,
To fast from getting angry and feast on being patient,
To fast from worry and feast on trusting God,
To fast from complaining and feast on gratitude,
To fast from negative thoughts and feast on positive ones,
To fast from nastiness and feast on friendliness,
To fast from greed and feast on giving,
To fast from envy and feast on congratulating,
To fast from conflict and feast on understanding,
To fast from selfishness and feast on helping others,
To fast from doubt and feast on faith,
To fast from holding grudges and feast on forgiveness,
To fast from gloominess and feast on happiness,
To fast from discouragement and feast on hope,

We trace the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads.

Together we say the prayer which Jesus taught us. **Our Father...**

Let us greet Our Mother Mary and ask the help of her prayers. **Hail Mary...**

Closing Prayer

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.