



**ASH
WEDNESDAY**

Optional Introduction to the Liturgy

Brothers and sisters in Christ: since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection. It became the custom of the Church to prepare for this by a season of penitence and fasting.

From early times this season of Lent was observed by those who were preparing for Baptism at Easter and by those who were to be restored to the Church's fellowship from which they had been separated through sin. In course of time the Church also came to recognize that, by a careful keeping of these days, all Christians might take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

After the Homily, the Priest, standing with hands joined, says:

Dear brothers and sisters, let us humbly ask God our Father that he be pleased to bless with the abundance of his grace these ashes, which we will put on our heads in penitence.

After a brief prayer in silence, and, with hands extended, he continues:

O God, who is moved by acts of humility
and responds with forgiveness to works of penance,
lend your merciful ear to our prayers
and in your kindness pour out the grace of your ✠ blessing
on your servants who are marked with these ashes,
that, as they follow the Lenten observances,
they may be worthy to come with minds made pure
to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of your Son.

Through Christ our Lord

R. Amen.

Or:

O God, who desire not the death of sinners,
but their conversion,
mercifully hear our prayers
and in your kindness be pleased to bless ✠ these ashes,
which we intend to receive upon our heads,
that we, who acknowledge we are but ashes
and shall return to dust,
may, through a steadfast observance of Lent,
gain pardon for sins and newness of life
after the likeness of your Risen Son.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
R. Amen.

He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything.

*Then the Priest places ashes on the head of all those present who come to him,
and says to each one:*

Repent, and believe in the Gospel.

Or:

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

Meanwhile, the Antiphons or an appropriate hymn or chant is sung.

*After the distribution of ashes, the Priest washes his hands
and proceeds to the Universal Prayer, and continues the Mass in the usual way.*

The Creed is not said.