

## **Ash Wednesday · February 17, 2021**

### **How to Prepare for the Imposition of Ashes at Home**

In many liturgical traditions, including our own, Ash Wednesday is marked by a worship service in which the priest will make the sign of the cross out of a paste made of ash and sacramental oil on the foreheads of the congregants. Often the ashes are palm fronds that have been burned from the previous year's Palm Sunday service. The service marks the beginning of the Lenten season of repentance and reflection.

Even though we cannot all gather together in person this year, we can still observe Ash Wednesday at home. Whether you plan to join us for an Ash Wednesday service online on February 17, 2021, or if you will observe the holy day at another time on your own, please learn how below:

#### ***Preparing the Ashes***

Gather ashes and place them in a small dish or bowl. If you still have palm branches or palm crosses from previous Palm Sundays, these are particularly appropriate to burn. No palms? No problem; there are other options. Ashes may be collected from your own fireplace or fire pit, or from the burning of leaves. You may burn a small piece of paper. Alternatively, you may simply use olive oil to trace a cross on your forehead. Some choose to mix a drop of olive oil with the ashes, but this is not necessary.

DO NOT MIX ASHES WITH WATER: this makes a caustic form of lye.

#### ***Imposition of Ashes***

Any baptized persons, including older children and teens, may place the ashes on the foreheads of others in their households, or on their own foreheads. One does not have to be ordained or licensed to impose ashes on others or on themselves.

#### ***Online***

During the February 17 online service, ashes will be imposed after the Officiant who is leading worship says the prayer that references the ashes. At that time, a designated member of the household will stand before other members, dip a thumb in the ashes, then trace the sign of the cross on forehead of each family member with that thumb, while saying the words, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." Those who are alone in their household impose ashes on their own foreheads, saying the same words.

#### ***Offline***

If you are observing Ash Wednesday offline, we offer the liturgy below for use at home. Appoint one member of your household as Reader; or, if you are observing on your own, read all parts.

*Reader*            In the name of the Church, we are invited to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, we come in silence before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

*Reader* Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes (or oil) may be a sign of our mortality and penitence, and may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

*The ashes are imposed with the following words.*

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

*After ashes have been imposed*

*Reader* Most holy and merciful Father: We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

*Response* **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

*Reader* We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

*Response* **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

*Reader* Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done,

*Response* **Accept our repentance, Lord.**

*Reader* Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;

*Response* **Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

*Reader* Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,

*Response* **That we may show forth your glory in the world.**

*Reader* By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

*Response* **Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

*Reader* Direct, O Lord, your people in all our activities with your most gracious favor and continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*Reader* The almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us. **Amen.**