



## The Beginning of Lent

A Season *for* Reflection, Sacrifice & Service



Please take time to find a moment of peace and prayer together as a family this Ash Wednesday. Maybe make a prayerful place in your house with a candle and gather to pray and to distribute and receive Ashes as a sign of your intent to turn once again toward God in prayer, fasting and almsgiving during this Holy Season of Lent.

Choose someone from your family to read the scripture passages aloud and pray the prayers together. Whichever way works for your family is fine. After the final prayer go outside together to dispose of the remainder of your ashes near the foundation of your house.

### OPENING PRAYER

We begin, as we do whenever we pray,

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

Lord, may everything we do begin with your inspiration, continue with your help, and reflect your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

**Amen.**

### INTRODUCTION

Today is the first day of Lent. It is the most important season of the Church year, because it prepares us for Easter, which is the holiest, most special day of the year for Christians.

Today is called Ash Wednesday, because we are marked with ashes in the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads. This reminds us that we are children of God.

At Baptism, when we became part of God's family, we were anointed with special oil in a cross on our foreheads. The ashes today remind us that we are human and we make mistakes. The cross reminds us that since we are God's children, we can ask God for His forgiveness and his help in becoming the children He wants us to be.

During Lent, we become closer to God in three ways: Reflection, Sacrifice and Service.

### REFLECTION

Just as we get to know our friends better by talking with them, we get closer to God when we talk to Him. We can do this by praying the prayers we've learned or just by saying what's in our heart and trying to listen back. During Lent, we think especially about how we act and treat others and how we can improve

our relationship with God. You can pray anywhere, anytime. You might want to try praying when you first wake up or before bed.

### **SACRIFICE**

We get closer to God through Sacrifice. Jesus sacrificed His life for us by dying on the cross. By giving something up during Lent, we remember how much Jesus gave up for us. Maybe giving up dessert or computer games would help remind us of what Jesus did. The money saved or extra time could go toward helping others.

### **SERVICE**

We get closer to God by serving others. At the Last Supper before Jesus died he washed his disciples' feet as a way of showing them that they needed to serve others. He said to his disciples, "Love one another, as I have loved you." This means loving not just family and friends, but all God's people, especially those in need.

By doing these three things – Reflection, Sacrifice, and Service – we move away from sin and we are doing as Jesus taught in the Gospel. This is why when we receive ashes today the Ministers will say "Repent and believe in the Gospel."

### **READING**

Isaiah 58:6-9

The Lord says this:

I'll tell you what it really means to worship the Lord.

Remove the chains of the prisoners who are chained unjustly.

Free those who are abused!

Share your food with everyone who is hungry;

    share your home with the poor and homeless.

Give clothes to those in need;

    don't turn away your relatives.

Then your light will shine like the dawning sun,

    and you will quickly be healed.

Your honesty will protect you as you advance,

    and the glory of the Lord will defend you from behind.

Then you will call for help,

    and the Lord will answer, "Here I am!"

Don't oppress others or falsely accuse them or say cruel things.

The word of the Lord.

### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

**You are kind, God!**

**Please have pity on me.**

**You are always merciful!**

**Please wipe away my sins.**

**Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again.**

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

**Make me as happy as you did when you saved me;**

**make me want to obey!**

**Help me to speak, and I will praise you, Lord.**

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

### **GOSPEL**

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:

“When you do good deeds, don’t try to show off.

If you do, you won’t get a reward from your Father in heaven.”

“When you give to the poor, don’t blow a loud horn.

That’s what showoffs do in the meeting places and on the street corners, because they are always looking for praise.

I promise you that they already have their reward.”

“When you give to the poor, don’t let anyone know about it.

Then your gift will be given in secret.

Your Father knows what is done in secret and he will reward you.”

“When you pray,

don’t be like those showoffs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners.

They do this just to look good.

I promise you that they already have their reward.”

“When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door.

Pray to your Father in private.

He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you.”

“When you go without eating, don’t try to look gloomy as those showoffs do when they go without eating.

I promise you that they already have their reward.”

“Instead, comb your hair and wash your face.

Then others won’t know that you are going without eating.

But your Father sees what is done in private and he will reward you.”

### **PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL**

We now take a moment to pray for others with Prayers of the Faithful. After each prayer we reply, “Lord, Hear Our Prayer.”

Let us pray for the Church. That all God’s people will remember their lonely, poor and forgotten brothers and sisters, by sharing their food, money and time with them this Lent and always.

We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the leaders of the Church, especially Cardinal Sean, Father Jim and Father Brogan. May God give them the wisdom to guide all of us to become holy in following Jesus.

We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for world peace. That those who lead our countries may do what is best for all the peoples of the world, especially the poor and needy, when they make important decisions.

We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the poor and suffering in our world, especially those battling COVID-19. May they find help, hope and comfort in the good works and sharing of God’s people this Lent.

We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for our parents. That God may help them to guide us always in what is right and true.

We pray to the Lord.

Lord, Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for each other. That God may give us His strength to be kind to pray, to share and to be kind to one another this Lent.

We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

### **SIGN OF PEACE**

Christians have exchanged the Sign of Peace since the beginning of the Church. The offering of peace shows our reconciliation with one another and our oneness in Christ. This action is not just saying the words “Peace be with you,” but is an opportunity to open your heart to your family, friends and the Church community. So now, we’re going to offer each other a sign of peace to our family by saying, “Peace be with you”.

### **RECEIVE ASHES**

Jesus knows that there are things that make us sad or are difficult for us. These things burden us and make it hard for us to focus on God and others. But Jesus wants us to share our burdens with Him and He promises to help carry them and make it easier for us. As you prepare to receive your ashes, you should think about what you want Jesus to help you with and silently thank Jesus for taking your burden from you. Then, with a lighter heart, you can receive your ashes.

Sign yourself, or your family members, with the ashes in the sign of the cross on the forehead saying:

**Repent, and believe in the Gospel.**

### **LENTEN PRAYER**

God, Father and Creator,

we thank You for all the gifts you have given us,

Especially the gift of Your Son.

During this holy season of Lent,

help us to change and grow and become the kind of people

You created us to be.

Fill our hearts with love for You and love for all people,

For we are all created in Your image.

Show us how to use the gifts You have given us

To help others in Your name.

As we journey together toward the light of Easter,

We know You are with us in all that we do. Amen.

### **REVERENT DISPOSAL OF ASHES AND CLOSING PRAYER**

While you place the ashes outside, near the foundation of your home, close with the following prayer:

*God our Father, You formed us from the dust of the Earth. You brought us to new life by the work of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. As we journey through these forty days of Lent, help us to see Jesus in everyone we meet. Help us to serve Him in all persons, especially the poor, sick, and lonely. By Your grace, may our prayers and sacrifices this Lent help us grow closer to You and to Your one family in Jesus. Bless this home, make it a vessel of Your love and peace.*