

Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

Use this Ash Wednesday prayer if you and perhaps others are unable to attend a church service. Choose a leader and readers. Sit in a circle. Place a small dish of ashes in the center.

LEADER: Loving God, you are with us as we begin the holy season of Lent. You teach us to give alms, to pray, and to fast. You teach us to act from our hearts and not just for show.

READER 1: Jesus said to his disciples, “Be on guard against performing religious acts for people to see. When you give alms, for example, do not blow a horn before you in synagogues and streets like hypocrites looking for applause. In giving alms you are not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Keep your deeds of mercy secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

READER 2: “When you are praying, do not behave like the hypocrites who love to stand and pray in synagogues or on street corners in order to be noticed. I give you my word, they are already repaid. Whenever you pray, go to your room close your door, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees what no person sees, will repay you.

READER 3: “When you fast, you are not to look glum as the hypocrites do. They change the appearance of their faces so that others may see they are fasting. I assure you, they are already repaid. When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden; and your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

Matthew 6.1-6, 16-18

Reflect on any of the following.

What giving of yourself do you plan to do this Lent?

What kind of prayer brings you close to God and to your neighbors in your family or community, or in the world?

What can you “give up” for Lent? Maybe candy, or maybe impatience. Maybe TV or maybe quick judgments. What will make you more joyful?

LEADER: Loving God, during Lent we want to grow closer to you and be more loving to each other. We will draw a cross of ashes on our foreheads as a sign of our commitment.

Pass the ashes around. Each person dips his or her thumb in the ashes and draws a cross on the forehead of the person on his/her right saying:

_____, you are a child of God. Make good choices during Lent.

LEADER: Let us go in peace.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

ALL SING: *This little light of mine,
I'm going to let it shine.
Every day of Lent, I'm going to let it shine.
Trusting in your love, I'm going to let it shine.
Let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine.*

