

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, the period we prepare for Easter by thinking where we are in our relationship with God and how we sometimes fall short of His best for our lives.

In the Old Testament, people would often show how sorry they were by tearing their clothes and putting ash on their heads (see Esther 4:1 and Job 42:6).

In the Christian Church it has become the custom to use the first day of Lent as a time to focus on saying sorry to God and to put ash on our heads as an external sign of our heart-felt repentance – turning away from sin and turning back to God.

Gather the following items before we begin:

Pen and paper

Your sachet of ash and some oil (like olive oil)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit **AMEN**

Holy God, our lives are laid open before you:
rescue us from the chaos of sin
and through the death of your Son
bring us healing and make us whole
in Jesus Christ our Lord, **AMEN**

Confession

We spend some time in quiet considering the things in our lives that we know are wrong and get in the way of our relationship with God.

You may draw or write them on your paper now.

Holding your paper we then say together:

**O God, our gracious Father,
we confess that we have sinned against you
and done many things to grieve you.
We have often been selfish,
we have sometimes forgotten to pray to you,
and we have not loved you as we should.
For these and all other sins forgive us, we pray,
through him who died for us, Jesus Christ our
Lord. AMEN**

Now take your paper and tear it into tiny pieces and put in the bin, or – if you have safe access to a fire, woodburner or incinerator – burn it.

Your sin is destroyed and gone.

Ashing

You can sprinkle dry ash on your head or mix a few drops of oil with the ashes in the bag and using the paste make the sign of the cross on the back of your hand or forehead. If you share your household, you can do this to each other. You can use these words:

Turn away from sin and turn to Christ. AMEN

After a moment of quiet we say together

May the Lord enrich us with his grace,

and nourish us with his blessing:

the Lord defend us in trouble

and keep us from all evil;

the Lord accept our prayers,

and absolve us from our offences,

for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. AMEN

Reading from Isaiah 6:1-3

The Lord has put his Spirit in me. This is because he has appointed me to tell the good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort those whose hearts are broken. He has sent me to tell the captives they are free. He has sent me to tell the prisoners that they are released.

He has sent me to announce the time when the Lord will show his kindness and the time when our God will punish evil people.

He has sent me to comfort all those who are sad.

He has sent me to the sorrowing people of Jerusalem.

I will give them a crown to replace their ashes.

I will give them the oil of gladness to replace their sorrow.

I will give them clothes of praise to replace their spirit of sadness.

They will be called Trees of Goodness.

They will be like trees planted by the Lord and will show his greatness. **AMEN**

(ICB Anglicised Edition)

Short Reflection

Final Prayer

God of compassion,

Through your Son Jesus Christ

You have reconciled your people to yourself.

As we follow his example of prayer and fasting,

May be obey you with willing hearts

And serve one another in holy love;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN