

# Ash Wednesday



## WORD OF THE WEEK

THE  
GOD  
WHO  
SPEAKS

MATTHEW 6: 1-6, 16-18

"Be careful! When you do good things, don't do them in front of people to be seen by them. If you do that, then you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

When you give to the poor, don't be like the hypocrites. They blow trumpets before they give so that people will see them. They do that in the synagogues and on the streets. They want other people to honour them. I tell you the truth. Those hypocrites already have their full reward. So when you give to the poor, give very secretly. Don't let anyone know what you are doing. Your giving should be done in secret. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. They love to stand in the synagogues and on street corners and pray loudly. They want people to see them pray. I tell you the truth. They already have their full reward. When you pray, you should go into your room and close the door. Then pray to your Father who cannot be seen.

Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

When you fast, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They make their faces look strange to show people that they are giving up something. I tell you the truth, those people already have their full reward. So when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then people will not know that you are giving up something. But your Father, whom you cannot see, will see you. Your Father sees what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

## I'm sorry

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten journey. The aim of Ash Wednesday is to think about decisions we have made and mistakes we have made along the way too. We are also asked to remind ourselves of how much we need a saviour, someone who forgives us for all of those bad decisions and mistakes. Ash Wednesday is a day we say sorry and remember with confidence that we have a saviour, Jesus, who conquered sin and death.

This reading helps us to understand what Lent is all about. During Lent we are asked to fast (give something up), pray, and give (almsgiving). These pillars of Lent help us to focus on God and reflect on our relationship with Him and how we are living our lives.

When have I made bad decisions or mistakes in my life that I would like to say sorry for?  
Where in my life do I feel shame, guilt, a need to start again or the drive to do better?  
Take a few moments in silence to confess these areas and situations to God.

You may be familiar with the outward aspects of Lent: ashes on the forehead, conversations about giving up fizzy drinks or chocolate or fast food. But Lent is not just about those external things. There is so much more to Lent than deciding between chocolate or McDonalds. You could, of course just decide that you will go without fizzy drinks or sweets for forty days and be done with it, but to do so would be depriving yourself of far more than sugar. You would miss something that God wants to do in you during this season of Lent. Are you open, willing and ready to begin this journey?

What is stopping you from making this Lent the best one yet?

# LENT IS A JOURNEY

You are not on a journey to God, you are on a journey WITH God.



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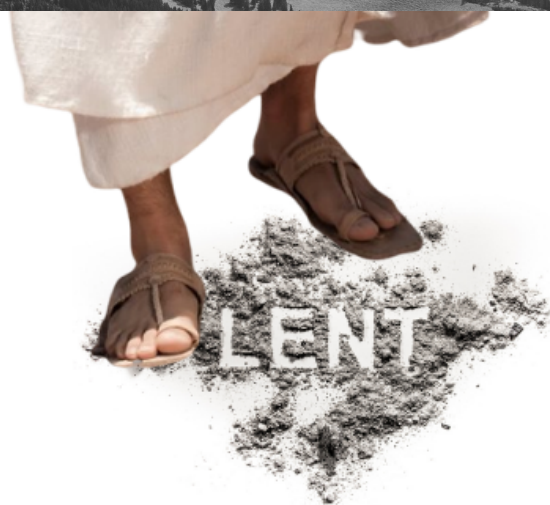
## Ash Wednesday Service

During our Ash Wednesday service you will have the opportunity to receive ashes, in the shape of a cross, on your forehead. This cross is a reminder that we come from dust and to dust we shall return one day. It is also a call to consider yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus.

So let us be marked  
not for sorrow.  
And let us be marked  
not for shame.  
Let us be marked  
not for false humility  
or for thinking  
we are less  
than we are

but for claiming  
what God can do  
within the dust,  
within the dirt,  
within the stuff  
of which the world  
is made,  
and the stars that blaze  
in our bones,  
and the galaxies that spiral  
inside the smudge  
we bear.

- Jan Richardson



## *In the Footsteps of Jesus:* A LENTEN JOURNEY



## Prayer for the Week

**Journey with us O holy God, as we begin our way to the cross. Sharpen our focus, that our attention may centre more on you than ourselves. Lead us through the shadows of darkness and prepare our hearts, that we might be a people of prayer, ready to understand better and respond to your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**