



“Return to me” — says the Lord — “return with all your heart”: not only with a few outward deeds, but from the depths of our selves. Indeed, Jesus calls us to live prayer, charity and penance with consistency and authenticity, overcoming hypocrisy. May Lent be a beneficial time to “prune” falseness, worldliness, indifference: so as not to think that everything is fine if I am fine; so as to understand that what counts is not approval, the search for success or consensus, but the cleansing of the heart and of life; so as to find again our Christian identity, namely, the love that serves, not the selfishness that serves us. Let us embark on the journey together, as Church, by receiving Ashes — we too will become ashes — and keeping our gaze fixed on the Crucifix. He, loving us, invites us to be reconciled with God and to return to him, in order to find ourselves again.

*Pope Francis,
Ash Wednesday Homily, 2016*

THE DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

Outside of the Celebration of Mass



**ASH
WEDNESDAY**

HYMN

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise;
in deeper reverence, praise.

2 In simple trust like theirs who heard,
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up and follow thee;
rise up and follow thee.

3 O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love;
interpreted by love!

4 With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let thy blessing fall
as fell thy manna down;
as fell thy manna down.

5 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace;
the beauty of thy peace.

6 Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm;
O still, small voice of calm.

GREETING

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

Presider Blessed be God, who has reconciled us through Christ
and calls us to new life by his grace. Blessed be God for ever.
All **Blessed be God for ever.**

OPENING PRAYER

Grant us, Lord, the grace
to begin this time of service with a holy fast,
that, as we struggle against the spirit of evil,
we may be strengthened by the practice of self-denial.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD OF GOD

A reading from the prophet Joel (*Joel 2:12-18*)

'Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks –
come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.'
Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn,
turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion,
slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent.
Who knows if he will not turn again, will not relent,
will not leave a blessing as he passes, oblation and libation for the Lord your God?

Sound the trumpet in Zion!

Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, call the people together,
summon the community, assemble the elders, gather the children,
even the infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom and the bride her alcove.

Between vestibule and altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, lament.

Let them say, 'Spare your people, Lord!

Do not make your heritage a thing of shame,
a byword for the nations. Why should it be said among the nations,
"Where is their God?"'

Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land, took pity on his people.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM (*Ps 50:3-6,12-14,17*)

Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.

In your compassion blot out my offence.

O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offences truly I know them;

my sin is always before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned;

what is evil in your sight I have done.

A pure heart create for me, O God,

put a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

