

Ash Wednesday 2024



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent each year. It is the start of our journey to the great feast of Easter. Ash Wednesday is the first of two *fast days* in our Liturgical Calendar. The other one is *Good Friday* and is at the end of our Lenten journey.

On Ash Wednesday, the priest blesses the ashes. These ashes come from burning the palms left over after Palm Sunday last year. Ash Wednesday is not a Holy Day of Obligation anymore but many Catholics still attend church or Mass on this day to be marked with the Sign of the Cross with the ashes on their foreheads.

Ashes is an ancient symbol of repentance. In Old Testament times, people showed their sorrow for their sins by wearing *sackcloth and ashes* on their heads. They wished to be forgiven for any wrongs they had done during the year.



Ashes also reminds us that our time here on earth will end and that our eternal life with God will then begin. This is what we were promised at our Baptism. Because of this, Ash Wednesday is

linked to our Lenten journey and to our life journey.



The priest or lay minister makes the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads with the blessed ashes, saying, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel". This is a reminder to us to leave our old ways behind us and encourages us to live according to the Good News that Jesus taught us.

The *cross of ashes* that is placed on our foreheads on this special day is a sign for everyone to see that we are willing to repent and to believe and live the Good News.

Prayer:



*Dear God,
As we wear these ashes today, help us to remember that you always love us. Help us not to be too busy to feel you with us every day. Make us a loving and healing school community. Help us to turn away from things that take us away from your love. Amen*