

Lent 2025 – Ash Wednesday

Reflect

Lent begins with human touch as oil and ashes are traced in the shape of a cross on our foreheads. From dust we were made; to dust we will return (Genesis 3:19). The intimacy of this symbolic act expresses God's invitation to 'be reconciled' right here, right now, in this moment, no matter how ready we feel—for 'now is the acceptable time' (2 Corinthians 6:2b).

Jesus has flung open the door and said, let nothing stand in your way. Come and see how loved and how precious you really are, in all of your humanity. Jesus will speak strength and love into all the places where you feel fragile and inadequate. He will speak hope into your fears and eternal life into your very mortality. For know this: you were never meant to do this alone.

Kate Bowler

These words from Kate are a beautiful reminder to see Lent itself as an invitation to something hopeful, something loving and something shared. Whatever you conceive God to be, however you've understood (or not) the story of Jesus, there is an invitation to being open to something bigger than our own world and its worries and joys. But there is also a very human and intimate aspect to Lent.

Even if you don't participate in a service on Ash Weds perhaps you can sit quietly with some oil and ash and say the words

'From dust you came and to dust you will return'

as you trace the sign of the cross on your forehead or hand with a mixture of oil and ash.

Read

So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, Labors, sleepless nights, hunger; in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, as unknown and yet are well

known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10 (NRSVUE)

Ponder

- How do you “Begin Lent”
- What are you hoping for?
- What are you expecting of yourself? Of God?
- How might the call to be reconciled with God, or as Joel says “return to me with all your heart” be a call for you as you make your way through Lent?

Do

When we take our thoughts and spiritual ponderings into a physical act or an action it can help open space in us for a deepening of those things.

Can you commit in some way to marking the season of LENT with an action?

Ideas:

- Abstain/ fast from something through Lent as a reminder of your journey with Jesus at this time. This could be a particular food, an activity, a single day a week where you miss a meal altogether.
- Set an intention by noticing something that gets between you and your life with God, then use Lent as a time to simply observe that “something”, be curious about when it occurs, how it occurs, how it makes you feel. Rather than abstaining from it (sometimes this can be more that you are resisting it than letting it go which can turn this time into a battle rather than a deep submission to Grace) allow yourself to carry on as normal but be observant. This type of Lenten practice can invite your heart, mind and soul into a different awareness that then leads to change.
- Commit to something different in your daily routine -a walk in nature, a swim, an extended time of prayer and reflection, a visit to an old friend once a week...singing a song each day on rising...the options are endless and need to fit your life but also offer a challenge to step out of your usual ways of returning to God.

Prayer

Jesus, as you are preparing to begin the journey to the cross, we turn our eyes and hearts, our minds and spirits towards you. We know so deeply that we have come from dust and will return to dust. Please be our guide through this time. Amen

Listen

You may like to listen to [Dust We Are and Shall Return](#) on Youtube.