



Ash Wednesday begins the season of reflection called Lent. Typically we impose ashes in worship to recognize the frailty of life and the need for self-evaluation as we approach Easter when we celebrate the saving work of Christ on the cross.

You may use these two pages for reflection and prayer before burning them to create ashes to use on Ash Wednesday.

Once you are finished using the page for reflection, carefully burn it being sure to use a clean, fire-safe dish. Then add a few drops of oil (any kind will do) at a time and stir until you get a consistency that will allow you to place the ashes on your forehead in the sign of the cross. Once the ashes have been prepared, save them to use with the streamed courtyard Vespers service at 5:15 pm, on Ash Wednesday, February 17. During the service, you will be instructed about how and when to use the ashes. If you decide to attend vespers in person, you may either use the ashes we provide or bring the ones you make from this page.

Reflecting on Dust:

God sent Christ into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. We are made of dust and to dust, we shall return.

Perhaps you recognize that death is close due to an illness or frailty of the body, or maybe you anticipate many more years to come. More often than not we would rather not even think about death. Take a moment to breathe deeply savoring the breath of life and centering yourself before answering the following questions.

What about death frightens you?

What about death comforts you?

Please pray:

Lord, you are with me in life and in death. I come to you today with my fears and my hopes regarding death. Grant me the courage to acknowledge my frailty and to perform the tasks necessary to ease my death for those whom I love. Yet do not let me become so focused on death that I forget to live, to recognize the joy and wonder of each day. Comfort me when I am fearful. Remind me that you never leave me and that you sent Jesus Christ, your son, for the purpose of ensuring that you and I would be together always, in life, and in life beyond death. Amen.

Practice of Confession

Almighty God, you despise nothing you have made and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts to acknowledge our brokenness and repent our sins.



Take a few deep breaths and ground yourself so that you might welcome with an open heart whatever is revealed to you in this time of confession. Ask God to reveal the truth of your life, to convict your heart into repentance and new practices, while also protecting you from a crippling amount of self-recrimination that comes from a source other than God. Be courageous and acknowledge specific ways you have missed the mark. Give yourself time and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to you your sin. Do not be afraid, God loves you even in all your imperfection and will guide you into repentance so that you might be forgiven and feel the loving grace and mercy of our Savior. Remember that God is with you and you are not alone.

Do you find it hard to recognize the ways you have missed the mark of God's will for you? Why? What are you afraid of? Or do you find it all too easy to find fault, allowing yourself to sin by getting lost in your imperfection and failing to see the areas in which you bring joy to God?

Why? What are you afraid of?

Use the following prompts to reflect on how you may have missed the mark. Let the Holy Spirit lead you through this list, if you begin to drown in the weight of sin, choose only a few of the prompts to explore. If you are in a mental and spiritual place that will enable you to use the majority of the list, challenge yourself to do so.

- Failing to love God with your whole heart, mind, and soul and not loving your neighbor or yourself.
- Harboring a hard heart and not doing the work needed to forgive or be forgiven. Whom do you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from?
- Ignoring the call to serve God and your neighbors either because of fear, lack of awareness, or using numbing practices to hide from the world.
- Failing to take time for rest and the spiritual practice of Sabbath, instead of nurturing a "God complex" believing that if you stop the world around you will fall apart. Failing to trust God to be God.
- Self-indulgent appetites, the envy of what others seem to have either materially, in relationships, or in spiritual maturity and peace.
- Dishonesty in your work and exploitation of others.
- Negligence in prayer, worship, and spiritual practice.
- False judgment, uncharitable thoughts towards neighbors, prejudice, and contempt toward those who differ from you.
- Getting lost in your own imperfection and that of the world so that you fail to see the beauty, joy, and wonder of the people and world around you and do not recognize or accept the gift of God's love for you.
- The waste and pollution of God's creation and a lack of concern for those who come after us.
- Other areas the Holy Spirit places before you.

Utilize this space for individual reflection and prayer...

Assurance of Pardon

Beloved Child of God, hear the good news. When you approach God with an open heart acknowledging the way you have harbored or acted with anger, judgment, or fear and the ways you have failed to act with love, compassion, and courage, you are forgiven. Our God is a gracious and loving God, a God of life and growth. A God who loves you enough to face death and triumph over it so that when you confess, nothing can separate you from the love of God. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace. Amen.