

ASH WEDNESDAY

In the course of today's Mass, ashes are blessed and distributed. These are made from the olive branches or branches of other trees that were blessed the previous year.

Introductory Rites and Liturgy of the Word

Entrance Antiphon

Wis 11: 24, 25, 27

You are merciful to all, O Lord,
and despise nothing that you have made.
You overlook people's sins, to bring them to repentance,
and you spare them, for you are the Lord our God.

The Penitential Act is omitted, and the Distribution of Ashes takes its place.

Collect

**Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting
this campaign of Christian service,
so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils,
we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

After the Homily, the Priest, standing with hands joined, says:

**Dear brethren (brothers and sisters), let us humbly ask God
our Father
that he be pleased to bless with the abundance of his grace
these ashes, which we will put on our heads in penitence.**

After a brief prayer in silence, and, with hands extended, he continues:

**O God, who are moved by acts of humility
and respond with forgiveness to works of penance,
lend your merciful ear to our prayers
and in your kindness pour out the grace of your ✠ blessing
on your servants who are marked with these ashes,
that, as they follow the Lenten observances,
they may be worthy to come with minds made pure
to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of your Son.
Through Christ our Lord.**

R. Amen.

Or:

**O God, who desire not the death of sinners,
but their conversion,
mercifully hear our prayers
and in your kindness be pleased to bless ✠ these ashes,
which we intend to receive upon our heads,
that we, who acknowledge we are but ashes
and shall return to dust,
may, through a steadfast observance of Lent,
gain pardon for sins and newness of life
after the likeness of your Risen Son.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.**

R. Amen.

He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything.

Then the Priest places ashes on the head of all those present who come to him, and says to each one:

Repent, and believe in the Gospel.

Or:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Meanwhile, the following are sung:

Antiphon 1

Let us change our garments to sackcloth and ashes,
let us fast and weep before the Lord,
that our God, rich in mercy, might forgive us our sins.

Antiphon 2

Cf. Jl 2: 17; Est 4: 17

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord,
stand between the porch and the altar and weep and cry out:
Spare, O Lord, spare your people;
do not close the mouths of those who sing your praise, O Lord.

Antiphon 3

Ps 51 (50): 3

Blot out my transgressions, O Lord.

This may be repeated after each verse of Psalm 51 (50) (Have mercy on me, O God).

Responsory

Cf. Bar 3: 2; Ps 79 (78): 9

R. Let us correct our faults which we have committed in ignorance,
let us not be taken unawares by the day of our death, looking in
vain for leisure to repent. * Hear us, O Lord, and show us your
mercy, for we have sinned against you.

V. **Help us, O God our Savior; for the sake of your name, O Lord, set
us free. * Hear us, O Lord . . .**

Another appropriate chant may also be sung.

After the distribution of ashes, the Priest washes his hands and proceeds to the Universal Prayer, and continues the Mass in the usual way.

The Creed is not said.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Prayer over the Offerings

As we solemnly offer
 the annual sacrifice for the beginning of Lent,
 we entreat you, O Lord,
 that, through works of penance and charity,
 we may turn away from harmful pleasures
 and, cleansed from our sins, may become worthy
 to celebrate devoutly the Passion of your Son.
 Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Preface III or IV of Lent, pp. 550-553.

Communion Antiphon

Cf. Ps 1: 2-3

He who ponders the law of the Lord day and night
 will yield fruit in due season.

Prayer after Communion

May the Sacrament we have received sustain us, O Lord,
 that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you
 and be for us a healing remedy.
 Through Christ our Lord.

Prayer over the People

For the dismissal, the Priest stands facing the people and, extending his hands over them, says this prayer:

Pour out a spirit of compunction, O God,
 on those who bow before your majesty,
 and by your mercy may they merit the rewards you promise
 to those who do penance.
 Through Christ our Lord.

The blessing and distribution of ashes may also take place outside Mass. In this case, the rite is preceded by a Liturgy of the Word, with the Entrance Antiphon, the Collect, and the readings with their chants as at Mass. Then there follow the Homily and the blessing and distribution of ashes. The rite is concluded with the Universal Prayer, the Blessing, and the Dismissal of the Faithful.