

**Service for distribution of Ashes**

**Welcome**

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent.

Traditionally people receive ashes on their forehead on this day as a sign that we are entering into a season of fasting and prayer in preparation for Easter. The ashes are made from blessed palm branches, taken from the previous year's Palm Sunday Mass.

The words used by the priest or person administering the ashes are either "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" or "Repent and believe in the Gospel." These words remind us that our lives here on earth will come to an end and that we must live them as well as we can, try to bring God’s kingdom into the lives of those around us while we can, and prepare ourselves for eternal life in the presence of God who loves us unconditionally.

None of us are perfect and we are beginning a season during which we can reflect on our lives and become aware of ways in which we can become better people.

**Opening prayer:**

Lord Jesus, may this season of Lent bring us closer to you. May it be a time of sincere reflection which will lead us to follow in your footsteps heighten our awareness of our sinfulness and strengthen our efforts to become the very best people we can be.

**Scripture Reading:** Ephesians 4: 25-32

So from now on, there must be no more lies. Speak the [truth](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=11728) to one another, since we are all parts of one another.

Even if you are angry, do not sin: never let the sun set on your anger

or else you [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) give the [devil](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=3815) a foothold.

Anyone who was a thief must stop stealing; instead he should exert himself at some honest [job](https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=22) with his own hands so that he may have something to share with those in need.

No foul word should ever cross your lips; let your words be for the improvement of others, as occasion offers, and do [good](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5257) to your listeners;

Do not grieve the [Holy Spirit](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5854) of [God](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5217) who has marked you with his seal, ready for the day when we shall be set free.

Any bitterness or bad temper or [anger](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=789) or shouting or abuse must be far removed from you -- as must every kind of malice.

*The Word of the Lord*.

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

1. 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. (R.)

2. 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. (R.)

3. 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. (R.)

4. Give me again the joy of your help;

with a spirit of fervour sustain me,

O Lord, open my lips

and my mouth shall declare your praise (R.)

**Gospel Reading:**  Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples, “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is

****in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

 *The Gospel of the Lord.*

**Blessing of Ashes:**

We ask God our Father to bless these ashes which we will use as a mark of our faith in His love.

 *The ashes are sprinkled with holy water*

Bless each of us, as we receive these ashes, with the courage and strength to keep this season of Lent holy and to prepare well to celebrate the resurrection of your Son at Easter.

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**Distribution of ashes:**

Either*: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return"*

 or *"Repent and believe in the Gospel."*

**Concluding Prayer:**

Lord, we pray for the strength to use these weeks of Lent to become aware of the way in which we live each day; to be conscious of the words we speak and the way in which we treat others. We pray that our faith will be strengthened and that, at the end of Lent, we will enter into the days of your passion and death with a new understanding and truly celebrate the joy and hope of your resurrection on Easter Sunday.



 Kildare and Leighlin 2019