

# ASH WEDNESDAY

26th February, 2020



## Finding God in Ash Wednesday

Every year Catholics celebrate Ash Wednesday. Do you know the meaning behind Ash Wednesday?

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## Spend your time with Christ in the Gospel this Lent

During Lent, we apprentice to Jesus in his forty-day sojourn in the desert. We stubbornly stay with him, doing what he did there, facing what he faced there.

The desert is the place of clarification. When we have been stripped of the relatively trivial desires that preoccupy us, we can see, with a somewhat disturbing clarity, who we essentially are and what most pressingly matters.

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**Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning. (Joel 2:12)**

Lent begins each year with this reading from the prophet Joel. It's clear that the Church chose this passage so that we too would return to God with our whole heart during Lent.

For the Israelites, returning to God meant that everyone gathered together and begged the Lord to save them. Together they also fasted, including those usually exempt from fasting, such as the elderly, children, and newlyweds. As they turned to the Lord with heartfelt repentance - with their "whole heart" - God "was stirred to concern" and "took pity on his people" (Joel 2:12, 18).

Just as sin is a turning away from God, this passage shows us that repentance is a turning toward him. And that is cause for hope. Why?

Because the One we are turning to is the God who takes pity on us, just as he did on the Israelites.

Because the One we are turning to created us in love and wants nothing more than for us to walk by his side.

Because the One we are turning to is the all-merciful God who sent his Son into the world to redeem us so that we could have a relationship with him and abide with him forever.

Because the One we are turning to knows everything about us - the good as well as the bad - and still calls us to follow him and become his disciples.

So as you begin the season of Lent, don't hold anything back from the Lord. Come to him with honesty and humility and confess your sins. But remember that as you are turning away from sin, you are also turning toward God. Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, keep turning to him. Believe that just as he did with the Israelites, he will respond to your heartfelt repentance - with forgiveness, mercy, and the grace to make lasting changes in your life.

### Today's Other Readings:

Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

*Let us Pray...* "Jesus, help me to keep turning toward you this Lent."