

ASH WEDNESDAY

MASS SCHEDULE

7:30am, 9:00am,
10:30am, and 6:00pm

LENTEN DEVOTIONS

*The Stations of the Cross will
be prayed weekly during Lent,
immediately following the
9:00 am Mass on Fridays.*

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday,
February 14th.

Lenten Regulations

Fasting is to be observed by all 18 years of age through age 59. On a fast day one full meal is allowed. Two other meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted but liquids are allowed.

Abstinence is observed by all 14 years of age and older. On days of abstinence no meat is allowed. Note that when health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige. When in doubt concerning fast and abstinence, the parish priest should be consulted.

Fasting, Almsgiving and Prayer are the three disciplines of Lent. The faithful should undertake these practices seriously in a spirit of penance and of preparation for baptism or of renewal of baptism at Easter.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

ASH WEDNESDAY LITURGY

First Reading, *Joel 2:12-18*, Return to the Lord for he is merciful.

Responsorial Psalm, *Psalm 51:3-6b, 12-14, 17*, Create a clean heart in us, O God, and be merciful.

Second Reading, *2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2*, Be reconciled to God; now is the day of salvation.

Gospel Reading, *Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18*, Jesus teaches that almsgiving, prayer, and fasting should be done in secret.

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today we celebrate Ash Wednesday, the first day of the liturgical season of Lent. In this season, we prepare ourselves to celebrate the high point of our Christian life, Easter. Each year, the readings for Ash Wednesday are the same. They call us to a change of heart and teach us about the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These disciplines are to be part of the Christian life during every season, but during the season of Lent, we renew our commitment to them.

The meaning behind tracing a cross on our foreheads with ashes (the liturgical sign of Ash Wednesday) is a summary of our Christian life. On one level, the ashes remind us of our origin and our death. (In the words of the prayer said when we receive ashes: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.") The ashes are also the sign of our victory: the cross of Christ. In his death and resurrection, Christ conquered death. Our destiny as Christians is to receive the victory over death that Christ won for us. We acknowledge that victory when we turn away from sin and are faithful to the gospel," words from the alternative prayer when we are signed with ashes.

Today's reading is part of the Sermon on the Mount. In the sermon, Jesus warns his followers against acting for the sake of appearance. When Jesus' disciples give alms, pray, and fast, they are to do so in such a way that only God, who sees the heart and knows what is hidden, will know. Although our Lectionary reading omits the Lord's Prayer, we can recall that Matthew presents that prayer as a model for the disciples' prayer (Matthew 6:9-15).