

Ash Wednesday Prayer Stations

Station 1: Confession

Read Psalm 51:1-3(CEB):

Have mercy on me, God, according to your faithful love!
Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great compassion!
Wash me completely clean of my guilt;
purify me from my sin!
Because I know my wrongdoings,
my sin is always right in front of me.

Have printed on [dissolvable paper](#) for each person:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Write your personal prayers of confession on the paper, or if you prefer, hold the paper and pray a silent prayer of confession. This is between you and God; no one else will see what you have written.

Take your paper with you to station 2.

Station 2: Forgiveness *have a host for this station

Write the name of someone you need to forgive on your confession prayer paper. It might be someone else. It might be yourself.

Crinkle up your confession prayer paper into a ball, kneel or stand at the kneeler, and read Psalm 51:9:
Hide your face from my sins;
wipe away all my guilty deeds!

Place your crinkled-up paper in the bowl of water and swirl it around. As you watch the paper dissolve, pray:

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

After your paper is dissolved, the station leader will read Psalm 103:8, 12-14:

The Lord is compassionate and merciful,
very patient, and full of faithful love.
As far as east is from west—
that's how far God has removed our sin from us.
Like a parent feels compassion for their children—
that's how the Lord feels compassion for those who honor him.

Because God knows how we're made,
God remembers we're just dust.

Station 3: Life and Death

The traditional words for giving ashes are:

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” and “Repent and believe the gospel.”

On Ash Wednesday, we remember that we all will die someday. We don't think about death on Ash Wednesday to make us feel sad or scared—we think about death on Ash Wednesday to help us feel thankful and joyful for our life. We remember that every day of our life is a gift from God. This helps us make wise choices about what we do with our precious time.

Light a candle representing your life which is a gift from God. Watch the flame and pray:

*Jesus, what do you want me to do with my day? With my week? With my Lent? With my year?
With my life?*

Watch the flame and listen with your heart.

Read Psalm 51:10(CEB):

Create a clean heart for me, God;
put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!

Take a candle with you to light at home, to remind you that your life is a gift from God and to help you pray about how God is calling you to use your time.

Station 4: Prayers for the World

Take a piece of clay. Notice how the clay softens and becomes shape-able as it warms in your hands.

When we pray, we put ourselves in God's hands. God warms and softens our hearts, and reshapes our lives.

Hold the clay and pray for the needs of the world.

Read Psalm 51:15-17 (CEB):

Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will proclaim your praise.

¹⁶You don't want sacrifices.

If I gave an entirely burned offering,
you wouldn't be pleased.

¹⁷A broken spirit is my sacrifice, God. [\[b\]](#)

You won't despise a heart, God, that is broken and crushed.

Station 5: Lenten Practices *have a host for this station

Read Psalm 51:12:

Return the joy of your salvation to me
and sustain me with a willing spirit.

Often, Christians give up something for Lent as a spiritual discipline, to better focus on God and practice obedience to God's will. The idea is saying no to something in order to say yes to God. This Lent, we offer an alternative approach: instead of giving something up, we practice giving ourselves permission to do what we need to do to follow Jesus. This approach is inspired by Dr. Brene Brown's permission slips. (more information: <https://brenebrown.com/resources/permission-slips/>)

Prayerfully fill out a Lent Permission Slip:

This Lent, I give myself permission to follow Jesus by

_____.

Signature _____

Some examples:

- Taking time to pray before answering a request
- Going deeper in conversation with friends
- Reaching out to someone in need
- Working to heal a broken relationship
- Focusing on God's expectations more than others' expectations
- Resting when I need to
- Being open and honest with God in prayer
- Speaking up for justice and mercy even when it is uncomfortable

Station 6: Receiving Ashes *Pastors host

Listen to the music* and reflect on your prayer station experience. If you wish, share what was meaningful to you with someone else.

The pastors will lead a short blessing and imposition of ashes at 6:15, 6:35, and 6:50.

*music playlist:

- You Make Beautiful Things Out of Dust* – Gunger
- Prodigal* – Madison Ryann Ward and Benji
- Dust We Are and Shall Return* – The Brilliance
- We Cry Mercy* – Greg LaFollette and Sara Groves

[Begin with sounding the bell tree]

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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We hope that the prayer stations have helped you to make a meaningful beginning to Lent. The season of Lent is a time of spiritual preparation, when we are extra intentional about getting ready to receive God's gifts of new life and resurrection. We confess our sins and our tendency to stray from God's best for us, and we renew our commitment to follow Jesus, acknowledging our dependence on mercy of God. This day we feel the weight of our need and our falling short of who God has created us to be. And we feel the comfort of God meeting us here with grace and peace. God is still creating us.

It is a good and joyful and hopeful thing to trust in God – we hear that in this blessing:

Blessing the Dust For Ash Wednesday

By Jan Richardson

All those days
you felt like dust,
like dirt,
as if all you had to do
was turn your face
toward the wind
and be scattered
to the four corners
or swept away
by the smallest breath
as insubstantial—
did you not know
what the Holy One
can do with dust?

This is the day
we freely say
we are scorched.
This is the hour
we are marked
by what has made it
through the burning.
This is the moment
we ask for the blessing
that lives within
the ancient ashes,
that makes its home
inside the soil of
this sacred earth.

So let us be marked
not for sorrow.
And let us be marked
not for shame.
Let us be marked
not for false humility
or for thinking
we are less
than we are
but for claiming
what God can do
within the dust,
within the dirt,
within the stuff
of which the world
is made
and the stars that blaze
in our bones
and the galaxies that spiral
inside the smudge
we bear.

Please come forward to receive the ashes and a blessing. You may receive the ashes on your forehead or on your hand. After receiving ashes, you may go in peace.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.
Repent and believe the gospel.
God loves you and God makes beautiful things from dust!
Go in peace into this Holy Lent.

Note: I was inspired by the following online articles in putting together these prayer stations, and adapted ideas for permission slips, candle lighting, and clay from them:

“Ash Wednesday Service Ideas and Why This Day is So Important,” Tim Suttle, patheos.com, posted March 5, 2014

“Self-guided Prayer Walk Offers a Different Kind of Ash Wednesday Experience,” Egan Millard, reporting on prayer stations developed by Rev. Richard Burden at All Saints Parish near Boston, episcopalnewsservice.org, posted February 26, 2020.