Ash Wednesday Prayer
Jakob Harmon, M.Div. student

Finite and Found

Holy God, we come into Lent the way we always come to You: carrying more than we admit, pretending we are clearer than we are, hoping You will speak gently and not too truthfully.

We hear again the old words, "r*emember that you are dust,*" and we want to rush past them, to turn dust into metaphor, to spiritualize what is, at heart, a bodily truth.
That we are fragile.
That we are finite.
That we are not in control.

You formed us from the ground, and we spend so much of our lives trying to forget that we belong to it, that it is our bodily home. We polish our schedules and our arguments, our resumes and our own righteousness, hoping that they will hold us together longer than they ever do.

Slow us down, O God. Not gently, if need be, but faithfully. Strip away the lies we use to survive, especially the lie that we are self-made, self-sustaining, self-saving. In this season, teach us how to repent without despair and how to tell the truth without losing hope. Remind us that repentance is not self-hatred but clarity; a turning toward what is real because You are already there.

We confess that we have loved comfort more than obedience, certainty more than faith, being right more than being reconciled.
We confess that we have mistaken busyness for faithfulness and noise for life.
We confess that we have known Your commands and negotiated with them anyway.

Yet even here, even now, You do not leave us to our dust.
You breathe again.
You speak again.
You send Your Word not to crush us but to call us by name.

So mark us, O God, not as the strong and impressive, but as those who know they need mercy. Write Your promise deeper than the ash, stronger than our failure, and truer than our fear. We ask this not because we deserve it, but because You are still faithful, and because even dust, in Your hands, can live.

Amen.