

# ORDER FOR THE BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES<sup>1</sup>

## Ash Wednesday

- ❖ The season of Lent begins with the ancient practice of marking the baptized with ashes as a public and communal sign of penance. The blessing and distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday normally takes place during the celebration of Mass. However, when circumstances require, the blessing and distribution of ashes may take place apart from Mass, during a celebration of the Word of God.
- ❖ If already blessed ashes are used, the blessing is omitted, and the distribution takes place immediately after the homily.
- ❖ This rite may be celebrated by a priest or deacon, or in their absence, by a lay person. The blessing of the ashes is always reserved to a priest or deacon.

### INTRODUCTORY RITES

Priest/Dacon:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen.

Priest/Dacon:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All:

And with your spirit.

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A lay minister begins the rite in the following way:

Minister:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Minister:

Praised be the God of grace, mercy, and peace. Blessed be God for ever.

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All: Blessed be God for ever.

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<sup>1</sup> This blessing is an adaptation of the rite for the distribution of ashes found in the *Roman Missal*, p. 192 ff/Roman Ritual, *Book of Blessings*, p. 703 ff.

In the following words, the minister prepares those present for the blessing and distribution of the ashes.

**Minister:**

My brothers and sisters, the hour of God's favor draws near, the day of his mercy and of our salvation approaches, when death was destroyed, and eternal life began. As we begin this season of Lent, we gather today to acknowledge that we are sinners. As we express our sorrow, may God be merciful to us and restore us to his friendship.

## **OPENING PRAYER**

**Minister:**

Let us pray.

Brief silence.

**Minister:**

Father in heaven, the light of your truth bestows sight to the darkness of sinful eyes. May this season of repentance bring us the blessing of your forgiveness and the gift of your light. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

**R.** Amen.

## **READING OF THE WORD OF GOD**

First Reading: [Joel 2:12-18](#)

Psalm: [51](#)

Second Reading: [2Corinthians 5:20-6:2](#)

Gospel: [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18](#)

Homily

## **BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES**

After the homily, the priest or the deacon if he is the one celebrating the rite, standing with hands joined, says:

**Priest/Dacon:**

Dear brothers and sisters,  
let us humbly ask God our Father  
that he be pleased to bless with the abundance of his grace  
these ashes, which we will put on our heads in penitence.

After a brief prayer in silence, the priest or deacon says the prayer for blessing the ashes. He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything.

**Priest/Deacon:**

O God, who desire not the death of sinners,  
but their conversion,  
mercifully hear our prayers  
and in your kindness be pleased to bless + these ashes,  
which we intend to receive upon our heads,  
that we, who acknowledge we are but ashes  
and shall return to dust,  
may, through a steadfast observance of Lent,  
gain pardon for sins and newness of life  
after the likeness of your Risen Son.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

**R. Amen.**

Then he addresses all those present and says only once the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general:

**“Repent, and believe in the Gospel”**

**or**

**“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”**

The priest/deacon then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. The Priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything. If required, a lay person may assist in the distribution of the ashes.

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If a lay person has led the entire rite, already blessed ashes would be used and the singular declaration of: **“Repent, and believe in the Gospel”**, or **“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”** is made before the distribution begins.

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After the distribution of ashes the ministers wash their hands and the rite concludes with the Intercessions and the Final Blessing.

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## **INTERCESSIONS**

**Minister:**

Our merciful Father does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they should turn from their sins and have life. Let us pray that we who are repentant may fear no future evil and sin no more.

**Response:** Lord, show us your mercy and love!

**Reader:**

By human weakness we have disfigured the holiness of the Church: pardon all our sins and restore us to full communion with our brothers and sisters, we pray: **R.**

**Reader:**

Grant the forgiveness of sins and the gift of new life to those who will be baptized this Easter, we pray: **R.**

**Reader:**

Your mercy is our hope: welcome us to the sacrament of penance and reconciliation this Lent, we pray: **R.**

**Reader:**

Give us the will to change our lives, and the lives of others, by charity, penance, and prayer, we pray: **R.**

**Reader:**

Make us a living sign of your love for all to see: people reconciled with you and each other, we pray: **R.**

**Minister:**

Now, in obedience to Christ himself, let us join in prayer to the Father, asking him to forgive us as we forgive others.

**All:**

## **Our Father....**

**Minister:**

Father, our source of life, you know our weakness. May we reach out with joy to grasp your hand and to walk more readily in your ways. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**R.** Amen.

## **CONCLUDING RITE**

**Minister:**

May the Father bless us, for he has adopted us as his children. **R.** Amen.  
May the Son come to help us, for he has received us as brothers and sisters. **R.** Amen.  
May the Spirit be with us, for he has made us his dwelling place. **R.** Amen.

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A priest or deacon, if present, would then bless all present:

**Priest/Deacon:**

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, **+** and the Holy Spirit. **R.** Amen.

**Priest/Deacon:**

Go in peace.

**All:**

Thanks be to God.

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