

BEFORE MASS ON ASH WEDNESDAY:

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THE BLESSING OF ASHES & THEIR IMPOSITION

The blessing of the ashes is one of the great liturgical rites of the year. It was originally instituted for public penitents, but is now intended for all Christians, as Lent should be a time of penance for all. The ashes used are obtained by burning the palms of the previous year.

After the blessing, the faithful approach the sanctuary and receive the ashes in the form of a cross on their foreheads and with the words: "Remember man that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

Antiphon (Psalms 68: 17, 2)

Exáudi nos, Dómine, quóniam benígna est misericórdia tua: secúndum multítudinem miseratiónum tuárum respice nos, Dómine. Salvum me fac, Deus: quóniam intravérunt aquæ usque ad ánimam meam. Glória Patri et Fílio et Spirítui Sancto, sicut erat in princípío, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen. Exáudi nos, Dómine, quóniam benígna est misericórdia tua: secúndum multítudinem miseratiónum tuárum respice nos, Dómine.

(Facing the altar at the Epistle side, with hands joined, the priest says:)

Priest: Dóminus vobíscum.

(All respond:)

All: Et cum spiritu tuo.

P: Orémus. Omnípotens sempitérne Deus, parce pæniténtibus, propitiáre supplicántibus: et mittere dignéris sanctum Angelum tuum de cœlis, qui bene+dícat et sanctí+ficet hos cineres, ut sint remédium salúbre ómnibus nomen sanctum tuum humilíter implorántibus, ac semetípsos pro consciéntia delictórum tuórum accusántibus, ante conspéctum divínæ cleméntiæ tuæ facínora sua deplorántibus, vel sereníssimam pietátem tuam supplicíter obnixéque flagitántibus: et præsta per invocatiónem sanctíssimi nóminis tui; ut, quicúmque per eos aspérsi fúerint, pro redemptióne peccatórum suórum, córporis sanitátem et ánimæ tutelam percipiant. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum.

A: Amen.

P: Orémus. Deus, qui non mortem, sed pæniténtiam desideras peccatórum: fragilitátem condiciónis humánæ benigníssime respice; et hos cineres, quos, causa proferéndæ humilitátis atque promeréndæ véniæ, capítibus nostris impóni decérnimus, bene+dícere pro tua pietáte dignáre: ut, qui nos cinerem esse, et ob pravitátis nostræ deméritum in púlverem reversúros cognóscimus; peccatórum ónium véniam, et præmia pæniténtibus repromissa, misericórditer cónsequi mereámur. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum.

A: Amen.

P: Orémus. Deus, qui humiliatióne flécteris, et satisfactióne placáris: aurem tuæ pietátis inclína précibus nostris; et capítibus servórum tuórum, horum cinerum aspersione contactis, effúnde propítius gratiam tuæ benedictiúnis: ut eós et spirítu compunctiúnis répleas et, quæ juste postuláverint, efficáciter tribuas; et concéssa perpétuo stabilíta et intácta manére decérnas. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum.

A: Amen.

P: Orémus. Omnípotens sempitérne Deus, qui Ninivítis, in cinere et cilício pæniténtibus, indulgéntiæ tuæ remédia præstitísti: concéde propítius; ut sic eos imitémur hábitu, quatenus véniæ prosequámur obténtu. Per Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Fílium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spirítus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

A: Amen.

(The priest then sprinkles the ashes thrice with holy water saying:)

P: Aspérge me, Dómine, hyssópo et mundábor: lavábis me, et super nivem dealbábor.

(The priest then incenses the ashes thrice. The faithful have the ashes imposed on their foreheads by the priest, who says to each:)

P: Meménto homo, + quia pulvis es, et in púlverim revertéris.

(Meanwhile, the choir sings the following:)

Antiphon. Joel 2: 13

Immutémur hábitu, in cinere et cilício: jejunémus, et plorémus ante Dóminum: quia multum miséricors est dimíttre peccáta nostra Deus noster.

Antiphon. Joel 2: 17, Esther 13: 17

Inter vestibulum et altáre plorábunt sacerdótes minístri Dómini, et dicent: Parce, Dómine, parce pópulo tuo: et ne claudas ora canéntium te, Dómine.

Response. Esther 13, Joel 2

Emendémus in mélius, quæ ignoránter peccávimus: ne, subito præoccupáti die mortis, quærámus spátium pæniténtiæ, et inveníre non póssimus.

Atténde, Dómine, et miserére: quia peccávimus tibi.

(Ps. 78:9) Adjuva nos, Deus, salutáris noster: et propter honórem nóminis tui, Dómine, líbera nos.

Atténde, Dómine, et miserére: quia peccávimus tibi.

Glória Patri et Fílio et Spirítui Sancto, sicut erat in princípío, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum.

Amen.

Atténde, Dómine, et miserére: quia peccávimus tibi.

(When the imposition of ashes is complete, the priest says:)

P: Orémus. Concéde nobis, Dómine, præsídia militiæ cristiánæ sanctis inchoáre jejúniis: ut, contra spiritáles nequítias pugnatúri, continéntiæ muniámur auxiliis. Per Christum, Dóminum nostrum.

A: Amen.

(The priest now vests in violet for the Mass, which begins with the Introit.)

Hear us O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind: look upon us, O Lord, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies. Save me, O God, for the waters have come in even unto my soul. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Hear us O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind: look upon us, O Lord, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

P: Let us pray. Almighty eternal God, spare them that are penitent, be merciful to Thy suppliants, and vouchsafe to send Thy holy angel from heaven to bless + and sanctify + these ashes, that they may be a wholesome remedy to all who humbly call upon Thy holy name, and who, accusing themselves of their sins as their consciences accuse them, deplore their crimes before the face of Thy divine clemency or, eagerly and humbly entreat Thy excellence and goodness; and grant, by the invocation of Thy most holy name, that any who shall be sprinkled with these ashes for the remission of their sins, may receive health of body and salvation of soul. Through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

P: Let us pray. O God, who desirest not the death of sinners, but their repentance, most graciously regard the frailty of human nature; and, of Thy loving kindness, deign to bless + these ashes, which we intend to put upon our heads to express our lowliness and win Thy pardon, that we, who know that we are but ashes and for the guilt of our fall shall return to dust, may be worthy to obtain, through Thy mercy, the forgiveness of all our sins and the rewards promised to the penitent. Through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

P: Let us pray. O God, Who art moved by humiliation and appeased by penance, incline the ear of Thy goodness to our prayers, and when the heads of Thy servants are touched with these ashes, graciously pour forth the grace of Thy blessing, that Thou mayest fill them with the spirit of compunction and mayest effectually grant what they righteously ask, and ordain that what Thou grantest may remain forever established and unmoved. Through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

P: Let us pray. Almighty eternal God, Who didst bestow the healing of Thy pardon upon the Ninivites when they repented in ashes and sackcloth, mercifully grant that we may so imitate them in behavior as to be like them in obtaining pardon. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

A: Amen.

P: Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed. Thou shalt wash me and I shall become whiter than snow.

P: Remember, man, + that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.

Let us change our garments for ashes and sackcloth: let us fast and lament before the Lord: for our God is plenteous in mercy to forgive our sins.

Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people; and shut not the mouths of them that sing to thee, O Lord.

Let us amend and do better for those things in which we have sinned through ignorance lest, suddenly prevented by the day of death, we seek time for penance, and be not able to find it. Attend, O Lord, and have mercy: for we have sinned against Thee. (Ps. 78:9) Help us, O God, our Saviour: and for the honor of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us. Attend, O Lord, and have mercy: for we have sinned against Thee. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Attend, O Lord, and have mercy: for we have sinned against Thee.

P: Let us pray. Grant us, O Lord, to enter upon the duties of our Christian warfare with holy fasts, that, being about to fight against the spirits of wickedness, we may be fortified by the Lord of self-denial. Through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.