

ASH WEDNESDAY

Beginning the Lenten Season in Community



Opening Music

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Be Still My Soul by Leigh Nash. Available online [here](#).

Introduction

Lent is a time to dream. A time to uncover the vision God has for each of us. It is important to recognise that, like us, God also has an imagination and dreams for the world. To do this we must have the internal freedom and willingness to allow for our imagination to be as big as God's dreams. Deep within our heart space are desires that ultimately lead us to God. Dreams and imagination are significant parts of spiritual life, guiding us and putting us more in touch with our Creator. We do our part but we are not alone. This Lent, we pray that we may become more in touch with God's dream for us and for our world.

Lenten Reflection

We travel the journey of Lent, as we travel the journey of life, with God and with one another. We are all struggling with something. Let us take a moment, therefore, to pray for one another. *(Pause)* Gathering and praying together, we have begun our Lenten journey in community. Journeys are made up of footsteps, taken one at a time. We all need help along the journey: stepping stones to help us across difficult places. Some of our stepping stones might be hope; courage; compassion; gratitude; peace. Let us consider what these stepping stones might mean for us this Lent.

Hope: We all need hope in our lives. Perhaps you need it for yourself, or perhaps you can give hope to someone in need of it. Will you share the strength God has given you with someone else? *(Pause)*

Courage: Courage is not the same as *not* being afraid. Courage is being afraid, but doing it anyway. Where in your life do you need the stepping stone of courage? Can you talk with God now about what is really difficult for you and ask God to give you courage this Lent? *(Pause)*

Compassion: Sometimes it is easier to show compassion for others than for ourselves. Can you believe that God loves you, just as you are? How might you show compassion for yourself this Lenten season? *(Pause)*

Gratitude: Perhaps you are grateful for something today. Or maybe you would like to ask God to help you to be grateful. Will you place your hand in God's and thank God for always being there for you? *(Pause)*

Peace: 'Peace I give to you; my own peace I give you.' Hear Jesus say these words to you now. Can you invite Him into those parts of your life that need His peace? *(Pause)*

Take some time to wonder with God, and consider which stepping stone you need most this Lent. When you have decided which stepping stone to focus on, you are invited to light a candle, and ask God for that grace now and as Lent continues. *As you feel called, place your candle in the prayer space.*

Catherine's Lenten Meditation

A Letter from Catherine McAuley to Mary de Sales White

April 19, 1841

"The impression made on our minds by forty days meditation on Christ's humiliations, meekness, and unwearied perseverance will help us on every difficult occasion, and we will endeavor to make Him the only return He demands of us, by giving Him our whole heart, fashioned on His own model - pure, meek, merciful and humble. All will then be easy and sweet, no agitation, no particular desire except to please and glorify God.

Pray for your portion of Easter Grace before the extra Treasury is closed. Pray fervently and constantly, do not give up until all is given to you."

Intercessions

On this Ash Wednesday, we remember the many invitations God extends to each of us, and so we pray:

Lord, help us to focus on what is life-giving this Lent.

You invite us to a time of solitude and prayer.

Lord, help us to focus on what is life-giving this Lent.

You invite us into the desert to find You.

Lord, help us to focus on what is life-giving this Lent.

You invite us to reject the bread that does not lead to eternal life.

Lord, help us to focus on what is life-giving this Lent.

You invite us to worship You in spirit and in truth.

Lord, help us to focus on what is life-giving this Lent.

You invite us into relationship with those on the margins.

Lord, help us to focus on what is life-giving this Lent.

You invite us to accept Your presence and support in our lives.

Lord, help us to focus on what is life-giving this Lent.

Our Father

Together, we pray...

Closing Blessing

Thank you, Lord, for bringing us together to start this journey of Lent. **Amen**

Thank you, Lord, for the blessing of remembering that You are with us every step of the journey. **Amen**

Thank you, Lord, for the blessing of those who will encourage us and walk with us, as You do. **Amen.**

