

Ash Wednesday Priest, Deacon, or Lay-led Liturgy of the Word & Distribution of Ashes

1656 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.

1657 This order may also be used when ashes are brought to the sick. According to circumstances, the rite may be abbreviated by the minister. Nevertheless, at least one Scripture reading should be included in the service.

1658 If already blessed ashes are brought to the sick, the blessing is omitted and the distribution takes place immediately after the homily. The homily should conclude by inviting the sick person to prepare himself or herself for the reception of the ashes.

1659 This rite may be celebrated by a priest or deacon who may be assisted by lay ministers in the distribution of the ashes.


The blessing of the ashes, however, is reserved to a priest or deacon. Also note there is no indication of the distribution of Holy Communion. This is to be simply a Liturgy of the Word of God.

This blessing is an adaptation of the rite for the blessing and distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday in *The Roman Missal (Sacramentary)*, as found in *The Book of Blessings* prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) 1989.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

1660 When the community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung.

After the singing, the minister says:

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

All make the sign of the cross and reply: R/. **Amen.**

1661 A Priest or Deacon greets those present in the following or other suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture.

**The grace, the mercy, and the peace
of God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior be with you.**

And all reply: R/. **And also with you.**

1662 A lay minister greets those present in the following words:

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

And all reply: R/. **Blessed be God for ever.**

1663 In the following words, the minister prepares those present for the blessing and distribution of the ashes.

**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

1664 The minister then says the opening prayer.

Let us pray.

After a brief period of silence, the minister continues:

**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

1665 A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture.

[The reading can be taken from the *Lectionary for Mass* for Ash Wednesday] Or:

1666 *[Deuteronomy 30: 15-20 Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom.]*

[Isaiah 58:5-10 Is this the manner of fasting I wish? That a man bow his head like a reed?]

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2--Be reconciled to God, now is the acceptable time.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18--Your Father, who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you.

1667 As circumstances suggest, the following responsorial psalm may be sung, or some other suitable song.

R/. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

1668 As circumstances suggest, the minister may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

1669 After the homily the minister, if a Priest or Deacon, joins his hands and says one of the blessing prayers that follow:

**Dear friends in Christ, let us ask our Father
to bless these ashes which we will use as the mark of our repentance.**

Pause for silent prayer.

Lord, bless the sinner who asks for your forgiveness
and bless ✠ all those who receive these ashes.
May they keep this lenten season in preparation for the joy of Easter.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

1670 Or:

Lord, bless these ashes ✠
by which we show that we are dust.
Pardon our sins and keep us faithful to the discipline of Lent,
for you do not want sinners to die
but to live with the risen Christ, who reigns with you for ever and ever.

R/. Amen.

He sprinkles the ashes with holy water in silence.

[a lay minister may distribute ashes blessed earlier in the day]

[If a lay minister is leading, the following words of Scripture are said over the blessed ashes:]

[Daniel turned to the LORD God, pleading in earnest prayer,
with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

O LORD, we are shamefaced, like our kings, our princes,
and our fathers, for having sinned against you.

But yours, O LORD, our God, are compassion and forgiveness!] (Dan.9:3,8-9)

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ASHES

1671 The minister then places the ashes on those who come forward, saying [one of the formulas below] to each: [If there are a number to receive ashes, other ministers may assist in the distribution.]

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel.

Or:

Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return.

1672 Meanwhile some of the following antiphons or other appropriate songs are sung.

These may be repeated after each verse of Psalm 51, "Have mercy on me, O God."

Antiphon 1 *Come back to the Lord with all your heart; leave the past in ashes, and turn to God with tears and fasting, for he is slow to anger and ready to forgive.*

Antiphon 2 *Let the priests and ministers of the Lord lament before his altar, and say: Spare us, Lord; spare your people! Do not let us die for we are crying out to you.*

Antiphon 3 *Lord, take away our wickedness.*

Or:

Responsory

℣. Direct our hearts to better things, O Lord; heal our sin and ignorance.
Lord, do not face us suddenly with death, but give us time to repent.

℟/ Turn to us with mercy, Lord: we have sinned against you.

℣. Help us, God our savior, rescue us for the honor of your name.

℟/ Turn to us with mercy, Lord; we have sinned against you.

1673 After the giving of ashes the minister's hands are washed; the rite concludes with the general intercessions and the final blessing.

INTERCESSIONS

1674 The intercessions are then said. The minister introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. From the following those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed.

The minister [introduces the Intercessions saying]:

**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 sorry for our sins
may fear no future evil and sin no more.**

Assisting minister: 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 to the Lord: ℟/. Lord Hear Our Prayer

Assisting minister: Grant the forgiveness of sins and the gift of new life to those who will be baptized this Easter. We Pray to the Lord: ℟/. Lord Hear Our Prayer

Assisting minister: Your mercy is our hope: welcome us to the sacrament of reconciliation. We Pray to the Lord: ℟/. Lord Hear Our Prayer

Assisting minister: Give us the will to change our lives, and the lives of others, by charity, good example, and prayer. We Pray to the Lord: ℟/. Lord Hear Our Prayer

Assisting minister: Make us a living sign of your love for all to see: people reconciled with you and each other. We Pray to the Lord: ℟/. Lord Hear Our Prayer

LORD'S PRAYER

1675 After the intercessions **the minister, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the Lord's Prayer.**

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 . . .

CLOSING PRAYER

The minister says:

Let us pray.

After a brief period of silence, the minister continues:

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

1676 The minister concludes the rite by saying:

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.

1677 A minister who is a Priest or Deacon then blesses all present:

**And may almighty God bless you all, the Father, and the Son, ✠
and the Holy Spirit.**

R/. Amen.

[A lay minister concludes by signing themselves and saying:]

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, ✠ and bring us to everlasting life.

R/. Amen.

1678 It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.