



Ash Wednesday

We begin the season of Lent with ashes on our foreheads. **Why this smudging.** To put on ashes, to sit in ashes, is to say publicly and to yourself that you are reflective...that you are grieving some of the things you have lost...that you are sorry for some of the things you have done. There is some important work is going on silently inside you. You are, metaphorically and really, in the cinders of a dead fire, waiting for a fuller day in your life.

All of this has deep roots. There is something particular to the human soul that knows that, every so often, one must be smudged, lose one's lustre, and wait while the ashes do their work. All ancient traditions abound with stories of having to sit in the ashes before one can be transformed. We all know, for example, the story of Cinderella. This is a centuries-old, wisdom-tale that speaks about the value of ashes. The name, Cinderella, itself already says most of it. Literally it means: 'the young girl who sits in the cinders. Moreover, as the tale makes plain, before the glass slipper is placed on her foot, before the beautiful gown, ball, dance, and marriage, there must first be a period of being humbled. In the story of Cinderella, there is a theology, or a story of Lent.



Figure 1 John Everett Millais - Cinderella 1881

Out of the ashes of your life you will rise. Turn your heart to God

The Church taps into this deep well of wisdom when it puts ashes on our foreheads at the beginning of Lent. Lent is a season for each of us to sit in the ashes, waiting while some silent growth takes place within us, and simply being still so that the ashes can do their work in us.

Prayers of the Faithful

As we begin this season of Lent as a family, may we open our hearts to the transforming grace of our loving God as we pray.

For the gift of Faith.

That the Holy Spirit guide us as we work to put the word of God into action everyday as we become people of God. Lord hear us as we turn our hearts toward love.

Hear our prayer loving Creator

For the gift of joyful witness of God's love in our world.

That the Holy Spirit inspire us to see the hand of God through the CES community as we continue God's work in everything that we do. Lord hear us as we turn our hearts toward love.

Hear our prayer loving Creator

For the gift of Generosity.

May our support for Project Compassion be generous and authentic as we support our brothers and sisters in the developing world who are suffering. Lord hear us as we turn our hearts toward love.

Hear our prayer loving Creator

For the gift of Reconciliation.

That the Holy Spirit this Lent keep us focused on what is important to live in harmony with others and to act compassionately. Lord hear us as we turn our hearts toward love.

Hear our prayer loving Creator

The ashes we have received on our foreheads, affirm that in the life-cycle, we are continually *dying* to the old ways and *rising* to newness. Though change is sometimes difficult, our faith helps us to break through what seems like disaster - to live with new life. May we all find that new life as we journey to Easter! May our ashes be a sign of our repentance and our willingness to change our lives for the better.

Amen

Resources

- The above reflection is adapted from: "*Daybreaks – Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter Week*" by Ron Rolheiser, OMI, pp. 3-4)
- A quick reminder of what Ash Wednesday and Lent is all about is [found here](#), a 2 minute clip from [Busted Halo](#). It might be a bit dated for your children (there is a reference to the Lone Ranger and Tonto!) but it is a good conversation starter as to why we do what we do on Ash Wednesday.