



# CELEBRATING ASH WEDNESDAY IN COMMUNITY

Operational Team InS  
February, 2026

LITURGIES AND DEVOTIONALS



# Ash Wednesday

## 2026



**InS**

Instituto Sustentabilidade  
América Latina  
e Caribe



# Celebrating in Community

## Liturgical resource for Ash Wednesday<sup>1</sup>

**Liturgical color:** Purple/violet

**Materials:** Liturgical vestments, cross, candles, bible and ashes.

**Important information:** This liturgical proposal for Ash Wednesday does not contain the Eucharistic Liturgy. In the event that your celebration includes Holy Communion, perform the Eucharistic Liturgy as is customary in your community. When celebrating the Holy Communion, please note that the Lord's Prayer is already included after the prayer of intercession. Therefore, if your congregation celebrates Holy Communion, do not recite it at the moment indicated on page 17, but during Holy Communion, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition.

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<sup>1</sup> Material prepared by Jonatan Alexandre Goltz and Paula Maria Jonas, Master's students in Theology at Faculdades EST.



# Ash Wednesday Celebration

## Opening Liturgy

**Bells:**

**Prelude:**

**Apostolic Greeting and Welcome:** Dear gathered community, grace and peace from God our Father and from Jesus Christ our Lord. Today we begin the season of Lent with the celebration of Ash Wednesday. We are reminded of our fragility and our limits, but also of God's mercy, who does not abandon us to the dust but calls us to new life. I welcome you with the words of Joel 2:13: "Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents from punishing." God invites us to

repentance, reconciliation, and trust in the love that recreates us. Let us sing our first hymn.

♪ **Hymn** ♪: *(Choose a hymn known by the community)*

**Confession of Sins:** Sisters and brothers, before God, who knows our hearts, we acknowledge our fragility and our sin, trusting in His promise. Therefore, in prayer, let us confess our sins: Merciful God, we confess before you that we have often strayed from your path. We have sought security in ourselves and forgotten to trust in your grace. We have closed our eyes to the pain of others, hardened our hearts against injustice, and remained silent when we should have acted. We are dust and we recognize our limits, but we also confess our guilt for what we have done and for what we have failed to do. For the sake of Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Create in us a clean

heart and renew in us the desire to live according to your will. Amen.

**Absolution:** Beloved community, God has heard our confession and remains faithful to His promise: “If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Therefore, if we confess our sins with all our heart and truly repent of them, God declares to us: your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (†). Receive the grace that lifts us from the dust and leads us to new life in Christ. Amen.

**Kyrie:** Lord, God of life, we present ourselves before you with the sign of ashes and the weight of our reality. We look at our continent, our cities, and our own hearts, and we see the mark of finitude and pain. Have mercy on us, for we often lose ourselves in self-sufficiency and forget that we are dust. Have

mercy on our tired hands and our feet that sometimes walk paths of omission in the face of the injustice that wounds your little ones in this suffering land. May our cry for help reach your altar. May your compassion renew hope amidst our ashes and sustain us on the journey we begin today. Hearing the cry of your people, answer us as we sing:

♪ **Hymn** ♪: *(Choose a hymn known by the community)*

**Gloria in Excelsis:** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to a wounded humanity. We bless you, O God of life, because even when we are ashes, your grace lifts us up. We praise you, because your Word calls us by name and offers us a new beginning. Therefore, let us sing:

♪ **Hymn** ♪: *(Choose a hymn known by the community)*

**Prayer of the Day:** Let us pray. God of grace, you know our vulnerability and you know that we are dust. Turn us toward you in this time of repentance, break what has hardened within us, and create in us a new heart, willing to hear your Word and to follow Jesus Christ with faithfulness. Sustain us on our journey, so that, reconciled with you, we may live in love, justice, and hope, until the day we celebrate the fullness of life that comes from you. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

## **Liturgy of the Word**

♪ **Hymn** ♪: *(Choose a hymn known by the community)*

**First Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 58:1–12

**Second Scripture Reading:** 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:10

**Gospel:** Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**Sermon:** Brothers and sisters in Christ, today the Church calls us to pause and face the truth about ourselves as sinners. Ash Wednesday opens the season of Lent, not with festive celebration, but with a serious invitation to reflection, repentance, and the conversion of the heart. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of three well-known religious practices among His people: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. But He is concerned not only with what we do, but with why we do it.

According to the evangelist Matthew, in verse 1, Jesus warns us: "Be careful not to practice your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them." Jesus does not condemn these practices, but He exposes a faith lived only for appearances—a heart that seeks human recognition instead of God's mercy. Jesus teaches us that God cannot be deceived

by outward appearances. He sees what is hidden and knows our hearts. As we hear in verses 6 and 18: “Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

This Word confronts us directly with our reality. We live in a society where we are constantly pressured to show results, appearances, and success. We are often judged by what we have, what we produce, and how we appear. But Jesus reminds us that with God, it is different. God sees the fatigue of those who work hard and earn little. God sees the silent prayer said on the bus every morning, in the line at the clinic, in the dry fields waiting for rain, in geopolitical turmoil, in the midst of concerns for family and the future.

Ash Wednesday confronts us with this truth. It reminds us that our lives are fragile, that we are limited human beings, carrying guilt, failures, and sins. Ashes, so simple and worthless in the eyes of the

world, carry a profound meaning in biblical tradition: they are a sign of mourning, contrition, and plea before God. Ashes remind us that all passes, that the treasures of this world fade and disappear. Ashes are what remains after the fire has burned out. They remind us that what seems solid—money, work, power, fame, and human securities—can suddenly crumble, especially when we drift from God, from our faith community, and from relationships built with care and love.

That is why Jesus warns: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... but store up treasures in heaven” (Matt 6:19–20). He concludes with words that touch the core of our lives: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21).

In biblical tradition, ashes have always been a sign of true repentance. People who recognized their sins would sit on ashes, wear coarse cloth, and cry

out for mercy. It was a way of saying: “I have nothing to offer except my broken heart.” Jesus does not reject religious practices; He rejects hypocrisy. He calls us to a faith that begins within and transforms our whole life—how we treat others, how we stand against injustice, inequality, violence, and exclusion so present in daily life, and how we cultivate hope and solidarity in upholding the dignity of life.

Lent is a time to reorder the heart. A time of fasting not only from food, but also from pride, indifference, and violence. A time of prayer that is not just words, but listening. A time of almsgiving that is not spectacle or empty charity, but concrete acts of sharing, justice, and mutual care that do not buy conscience but call us to review our relationships, our priorities, and our responsibility toward our neighbor.

At the end of this sermon, we will receive the cross of ashes on our foreheads. This gesture is not a religious decoration nor a sign of spiritual superiority.

It is a visible confession of an inner truth: we are dust, completely dependent on God's grace. The ashes speak of our human condition; the cross speaks of Christ's love that does not reject a repentant heart.

By receiving this sign, we are saying inwardly, without words: I recognize my sins, I mourn my mistakes, I plead for God's mercy, and I set out on the journey, preparing to live Lent as a time of repentance, faith, and renewal in Christ. Amen.

*(Make the gesture of tracing the sign of the cross (†) with ashes on the forehead of those who so desire. At the moment of doing so, say the following verse: "For dust you are and to dust you will return" Genesis 3:19.)*

**The Apostles' Creed:** I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty, from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Intercessory Prayer:** God of compassion and faithfulness, we bring before you the pains of the world and the cries that often find no voice. We remember those who live without hope, those who carry grief, fear, loneliness, and discouragement. Sustain those who feel at the limit of their strength and bring forth signs of care and solidarity. We entrust to you the peoples marked by wars, armed conflicts, and all forms of violence. Interrupt the

paths of hatred and inspire concrete gestures of reconciliation and peace. We pray for political authorities and all who exercise power and leadership. Grant them wisdom, a sense of justice, and commitment to the common good. We remember the sick, those facing poverty, hunger, and exclusion, and those suffering from disasters, injustice, and negligence. Give us watchful eyes and willing hands to be instruments of your care. We remember your church throughout the world. Amidst human fragility, keep us firm in the Word and grace, so that we may be a sign of hope, service, and reconciliation. All this we place before you, trusting not in our merits, but in your mercy revealed in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*(If Holy Communion is celebrated, omit the Lord's Prayer here and reserve it for the Eucharistic Liturgy.)*

**The Lord's Prayer:** Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

♪ **Hymn** ♪: *(Choose a hymn known by the community)*

## **Eucharistic Liturgy**

*(If the celebration includes Holy Communion, follow the usual Eucharistic Liturgy. If there is no Communion, proceed to the Sending Liturgy.)*

## **Sending Liturgy**

**Announcements:** Community announcement time.

**Blessing:** May the God who calls us from dust to life, who meets us in our fragility and sustains us by grace, accompany you in this Lenten season. May Christ walk with you and strengthen you in love, and may the Holy Spirit renew you in hope and service. Thus, may the triune God bless you: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Dismissal:** Go in peace, reconciled with God.

**Postlude:**






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