

Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

Week 9: February 27-March 5, 2022

Celebrate Ash Wednesday

This year, we are focusing on who God is and how we can celebrate him and the life that he offers to us. We will draw deeper into a relationship with the Lord through examining his nature and desire for personal intimacy with us as his people, and we are going to do so in such a fun way! We are going to journey in 2022 through practical ways to celebrate various holidays! We will look at many of your favorite celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and much more. We will explore the historic, liturgical holidays of the year, learn about the Jewish festivals of the Bible days, and even consider some of the celebrations of other religious faiths. I'm so glad you will be on this journey with us.

In this packet, you will find some ideas for you to grow closer to God, your family, and others. Nothing is required. It is all for fun and your personal enjoyment and growth. There are enough activities that you could do one or two per day during the week if you want. If you don't want to do something, skip it. If another idea comes to mind, do it. Watch for God's abundant goodness and celebrate it.

Come Join Us as We
CELEBRATE GOD!



*"They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness."*

Dr. Patrick Wilson

(Psalm 145:7)

2022



Video Devotional

Go to Patrick Wilson's YouTube page and watch the video devotional for this week: Celebrate Ash Wednesday. Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

- Why did Ezra fast and pray rather than seek aid from the king?
- What does "rend your heart" mean to you (Joel 2:13)?
- What do ashes represent during Lent?
- Have you ever attended an Ash Wednesday service?
- Have you ever fasted from food before? Why or why not?
- What is something that you could consider fasting from this Lent?
- What is a sin that you need to confess and repent of?
- What is something about Jesus that you can praise him for?

Craft: Pocket Poster

1. Use poster board or cardstock and decorate 2/3 to 3/4 of the page with your own Easter graphics (i.e., cross, tomb, flowers, Jesus, crown of thorns).
2. Divide the bottom portion into three sections. Using additional paper, cut out three pockets and staple them to the large sheet leaving the top open like a pocket.
3. On one pocket write, "pray," on the second pocket write, "fast," and on the third pocket write, "give."
4. Brainstorm activities that can go in each of the pockets, write them, cut them out, and put them in the pockets.
5. Each day, let someone pull out one of the strips of paper. Let the whole family try to do that one activity during the day. (For a template or example activities, go to: <https://www.looktohimandberadiant.com/2017/02/lent-pray-fast-give-printable.html>)

Supplies:

- Poster Board or Card Stock
- Paper
- Markers/Crayons
- Scissors
- Stapler



Foods to Prepare

Lent is a 40 day observance prior to Easter that begins on Ash Wednesday. The most common practice during Lent is to fast. Among practicing Catholics, fasting is typically limited to the ages of 18 to 59 and excludes those with physical or mental challenges, chronic illness, nursing or pregnant mothers, or others with guidance from medical doctors. According to the USCCB, the purpose of fasting is to seek the Lord in prayer, reading of scripture, giving alms, and practicing self-control through fasting.

When fasting from food, people are encouraged to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals (that together are not a full meal) per day. Typically, those fasting abstain from eating animals that are warm-blooded on Fridays (commemorative of the shed blood of Jesus on Good Friday). Eating of fish and shellfish are preferred on Fridays. Eating products made from meat liquids are considered appropriate when fasting (i.e., broth, soup cooked or flavored by meat, gravies, sauces, seasonings).

Consider taking time during Lent to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting. Instead of being legalistic about it, use this time as a way to allocate time to the inner conversation of the heart and seeking to follow the Lord more faithfully.

Activity: Fasting Other Things

For various reasons you may opt to not fast from food. Regardless of your dietary practices, consider fasting from something else and devoting that focus and time to listening to and obeying God's direction.

Here are some examples of things you could "fast" until Easter:

1. Caffeine: coffee, tea, soda, etc.
2. Sweets: cookies, cake, pie, ice cream, candy, etc.
3. TV/Streaming/Movies: (Record priority shows to watch later.)
4. Social Media: FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter, Tic Toc, etc.
5. Other Entertainment: video games, eating out, outings, events, etc.



Movies to Watch


If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. Here are some of the best movies where someone sacrifices self for others, but you certainly are not limited to this list. Pop some popcorn, curl up on the couch, and en-

Egg Hunt Game

Throughout the coming weeks, consider having various plastic egg hunts. You could buy a set of Resurrection Eggs to use pulling one of the “prize” eggs to go with other candy filled eggs in the hunt. Then, talk about that one item with your family. Another option is to make your own “prize” eggs with a special item in one egg that leads to a God conversation. Here are a few examples from the Gospel of Matthew:

- Goldfish (Mt. 4:19)
- Salt Packet (Mt. 5:13)
- Grape or Other Small Fruit (Mt. 7:20)
- Band-Aid (Mt. 9:35)
- Seeds (Mt. 13:8)
- Rock (Mt. 16:18)
- Cotton Ball (Mt. 17:2)
- Wedding Ring (Mt. 22:1-2)
- Coin (Mt. 22:21)

Sacrifice Movies:

- Avengers Endgame
 - Star Wars: Rogue One
 - Braveheart
 - Independence Day
 - Big Hero 6
 - Armageddon
 - 300
 - I Am Legend
 - Star Wars: A New Hope
 - T2: Judgment Day
 - The Iron Giant
 - Star Trek 2: The Wrath of Kahn
 - The Fellowship of the Ring
 - Inside Out
 - The Bridge Over the River Kwai
 - Gran Torina
 - The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
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Bible Study

“But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Mt. 6:17-18).

Jesus counsels that when we fast we should avoid doing it in a way that draws attention to ourselves (disfiguring our faces, speaking out about our sacrifice, promoting our piety, etc.). This principle applies to any spiritual discipline or practice in our lives.

Conversely, Jesus commends us to go about our normal, everyday behavior and practices of hygiene. The point is that we should not seek the attention of others when our focus is placed on intimacy with God. The Lord is unseen to our naked eyes, but we are seen by him. He sees what we do in secret and our goal in spiritual practices is to grow relationally with the God that knows us better than we know ourselves.

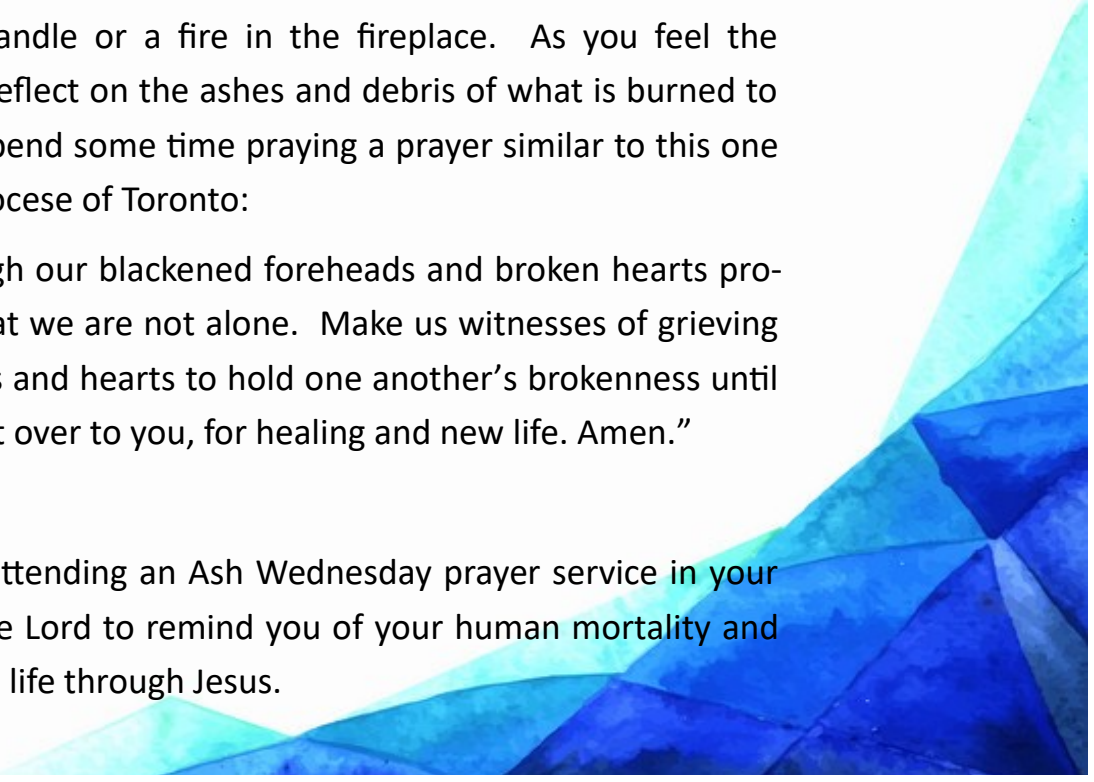
Consider how you can draw more attention to the Lord and less attention to yourself as you serve Jesus this week.

Prayer Time

Consider lighting a candle or a fire in the fireplace. As you feel the warmth of the light, reflect on the ashes and debris of what is burned to produce that light. Spend some time praying a prayer similar to this one offered by the Archdiocese of Toronto:

“God of ashes, through our blackened foreheads and broken hearts proclaim to the world that we are not alone. Make us witnesses of grieving well. Open our hands and hearts to hold one another’s brokenness until we are ready to turn it over to you, for healing and new life. Amen.”

If possible, consider attending an Ash Wednesday prayer service in your community. Allow the Lord to remind you of your human mortality and the gift of undeserved life through Jesus.





Service: Yardwork

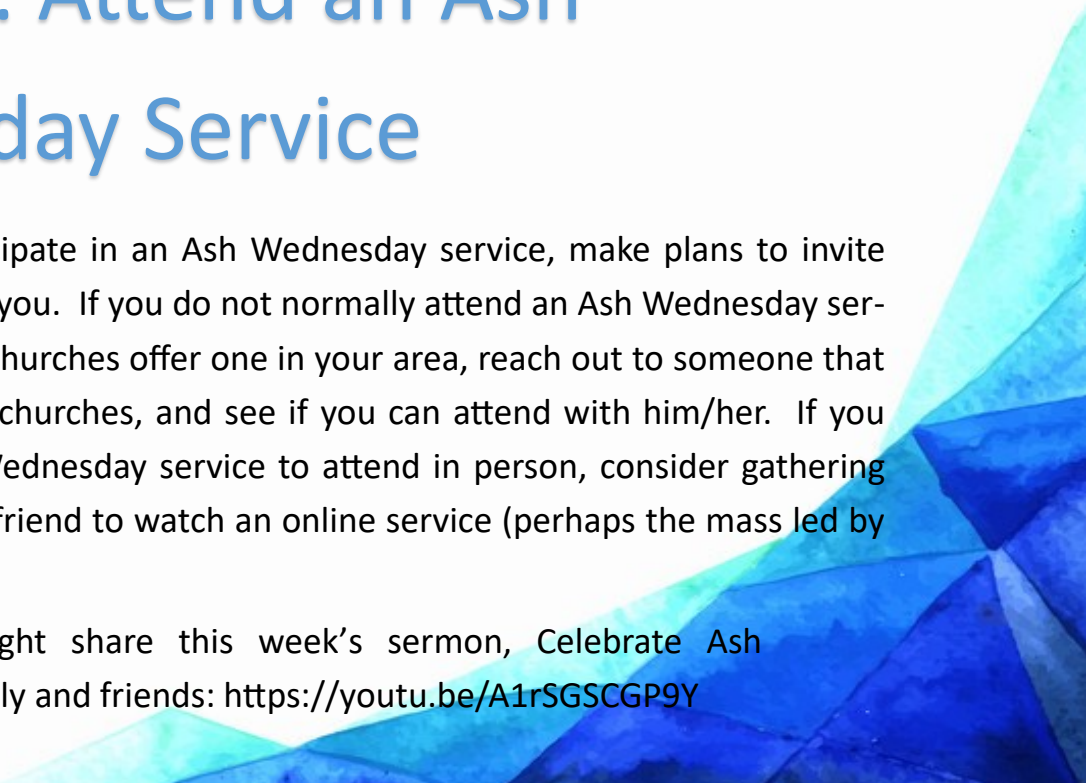
Typically, the Easter season falls around the transitional time between the winter and spring seasons. In many Ash Wednesday services, priests and pastors will take ash from the previous year's palm branches and place them on the forehead of the congregants in the form of a cross. This is a reminder that we are dead in our sins but made alive through the cross of Christ. Like winter which gives birth to spring, our lives are given new birth in Christ.

Make plans to get outside in your yard, flowerbeds, or garden. Begin to make preparations for the coming spring. As you till the soil, fertilize, and begin to care for the growth that occurs around your home, be mindful of the newness of life that Jesus offers to us as his people. Consider how you might join with God in cultivating the lives of others in your sphere of influence (i.e., family, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, acquaintances), pointing them to the Life Giver, Jesus. Pray for those that God brings to mind and for your own spiritual growth in the coming days as Easter approaches.

Connect: Attend an Ash Wednesday Service

If you normally participate in an Ash Wednesday service, make plans to invite someone to join with you. If you do not normally attend an Ash Wednesday service, look into which churches offer one in your area, reach out to someone that attends one of these churches, and see if you can attend with him/her. If you cannot find an Ash Wednesday service to attend in person, consider gathering with your family or a friend to watch an online service (perhaps the mass led by Pope Francis).

Additionally, you might share this week's sermon, Celebrate Ash Wednesday, with family and friends: <https://youtu.be/A1rSGSCGP9Y>



Worship

Carve out some time to listen to worship music, hum or sing along. Here are some great songs to get you started. These songs focus on the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. Look them up on YouTube if you don't have them in your music repertoire.

Pick your own songs and spend time worshipping and celebrating who God is to you and all the ways that he has blessed your life.

The Sacrifice of Jesus Worship Songs:

- Jesus Messiah
- In Christ Alone
- The Power of the Cross
- Jesus Paid it All
- At the Cross (Love Ran Red)
- The Wonderful Cross
- Lead Me to the Cross
- When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
- The Old Rugged Cross
- It is Well With My Soul

Challenge: Break a Bad, Sinful Habit

During Lent, it is common for us to be thoughtful about sin and destructive patterns and maybe even consider "fasting" from them for a few weeks. What if we decided to work on permanently removing a bad, sinful habit from our lives?

The below video is geared for students, but it has great advice for all ages. Watch the video, fill out the worksheet, and intentionally work on breaking a bad habit: video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnFVFfAlmEg> , worksheet: https://static.tumblr.com/s2l6mjv/kormizxts/breaking_bad_habits.pdf

"Lent comes providentially to reawaken us, to shake us from our lethargy."

—Pope Francis