
Each person then kisses the cross.

All then stand, and the leader concludes:

All through these days let us be quiet and prayerful, pondering the mysteries told in the Scriptures. In the cross, we have been claimed for Christ. In Christ, we make the prayer that fills these days of mercy:

Our Father . . .
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
Are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

The leader says:

Let us bless the Lord.

All respond, making the sign of the cross:

Thanks be to God.

The blessing may conclude with an appropriate ong.

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ASH WEDNESDAY BLESSING OF THE SEASON AND OF A PLACE OF PRAYER

From Ash Wednesday to Pentecost, a place in the home is set aside for prayer. The family's Bible is placed there with a cross and a candle, which is lighted when all have gathered.

All make the sign of the cross as the leader begins:

The Lord calls us to days of penance and mercy.
Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All respond:

Now and for ever.

The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:

Remember that we are but dust and ashes, yet by God's grace we have died in baptism and have put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Each year we keep these Forty Days with prayer and penance and the practice of charity so that we may come to the Easter festival ready to renew once more the life-giving commitment of our baptism. Through this Lent we shall gather here to read the Scriptures and ponder them and to intercede with God for the needs of the world.

Then the Scripture is read:

Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

Is this the manner of fasting I wish,
of keeping a day of penance:
That a man bow his head like a reed,
and lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Do you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?
This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking every yoke;
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your wound shall quickly be healed;
Your vindication shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!
If you remove from your midst oppression,
false accusation and malicious speech;
If you bestow your bread on the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted;
Then light shall rise for you in the darkness,
and the gloom shall become for you like midday.

Isaiah 58:5-10

CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS

(The family's Bible may be used for an alternate reading such as Deuteronomy 30:15-20.)

The reader concludes:

The Word of the Lord.

All respond:

Thanks be to God.

After a time of silence, members of the household offer prayers of intercession for the world, the Church and its catechumens, and themselves. The leader then invites:

Let us kneel and ask God's blessing on us and on this holy season.

After a short silence, the leader continues:

Merciful God,
you called us forth from the dust of the earth;
you claimed us for Christ in the waters of baptism.
Look upon us as we enter these Forty Days
bearing the mark of ashes,
and bless our journey through the desert of Lent
to the font of rebirth.
May our fasting be hunger for justice;
our alms, a making of peace;
our prayer, the chant of humble and grateful hearts.
All that we do and pray is in the name of Jesus,
for in his cross you proclaim your love
for ever and ever.
R. Amen.

Ash Wednesday: Blessing of the Season
and of a Place of Prayer