

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 22, 2023

WELCOME

Take time to pray and reflect using the scriptures, blessing, and reflection questions below.

Ash Wednesday begins Lent, a season of forty days leading up to Easter. Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word "lencten", which means "spring." The forty days represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring temptation and preparing to begin his ministry. Lent is a time in church life for repentance, fasting and preparation for the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a time of self-examination and reflection.

Learn more and find resources to practice Lent at southelkhorncc.org/lent

SCRIPTURE

Joel 2:12-13

*Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,

with fasting, with weeping, and with
mourning;

rend your hearts and not your clothing.*

Isaiah 61:1-3

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to
the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,*

*and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in
Zion—
to give them a garland instead of
ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of
mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint
spirit.
They will be called oaks of
righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his
glory.*

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Rend Your Heart

A Blessing for Ash Wednesday

To receive this blessing,
all you have to do
is let your heart break.
Let it crack open.
Let it fall apart
so that you can see
its secret chambers,
the hidden spaces
where you have hesitated
to go.

Your entire life
is here, inscribed whole
upon your heart's walls:
every path taken
or left behind,
every face you turned toward
or turned away,
every word spoken in love
or in rage,
every line of your life
you would prefer to leave
in shadow,
every story that shimmers
with treasures known
and those you have yet
to find.

It could take you days
to wander these rooms.
Forty, at least.

And so let this be
a season for wandering,
for trusting the breaking,
for tracing the rupture
that will return you
to the One who waits,
who watches,
who works within
the rending
to make your heart
whole.

—Jan Richardson

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passages and prayer slowly. What stands out to you or touches your heart?
2. Ash Wednesday is about entering the wilderness of our brokenness, grief, resentment or loneliness. Transformation begins in brave, honest self-examination. What is heavy in your heart?
3. What might repentance mean for you at this moment in your life? What needs forgiving, mending, or healing?
4. The ashes we wear are not so much about endings as an opportunity to *begin again* in light of the end. What needs to begin again in you? How will you practice that new beginning this Lent?

*Find ideas for practicing lent using
the QR code or link below*

