



# Lenten Devotions Created for Community Ash Wednesday

On Ash Wednesday we hear the invitation to take up the disciplines of Lent: *self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love.* In the presence of God and one another we confess our sins including

*. . . our neglect of human need and suffering  
. . . our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us  
. . . our waste and pollution of creation.*

Then we hear those stark words as ashes are placed on our foreheads: “*Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.*” Even if we are unable to observe Ash Wednesday in the usual way, the invitation, the confession, and the reminder of our mortality are still essential components of this day.

All of these aspects make it clear that we are **created for community**. The disciplines of Lent call us to honesty about our arrogance and sense of entitlement so that we can look outward and respond to the needs of others. We confess not just as individuals, but as a community that has failed to live as we were created – in harmony with God, with one another, and with all of creation. The truth that we are dust and to dust we shall return is a truth that we share with all living creatures. Our life springs forth from God’s creation and returns to that creation at its end. Lent calls us to honor and nurture community, to care for others, to be reconciled to God and to one another.

## Isaiah 58: 6-12

<sup>6</sup> *Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?*

<sup>7</sup> *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your  
house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*

<sup>8</sup> *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator shall go before you,  
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear  
guard.*

<sup>9</sup> *Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.*

*If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of  
evil,*

<sup>10</sup> *if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.*

<sup>11</sup> *The LORD will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.*

<sup>12</sup> *Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many  
generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.*



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This is one of the assigned texts for Ash Wednesday. **“Here I am”** says God, as you do justice, feed the hungry, and welcome the poor. As you reach out to bring healing and justice to other, you will experience healing. You will be restored.

There is much that needs restored these days. The breaches in our society we have experienced because of the pandemic, racial injustice, and political divides may seem beyond repair. That is why it is even more important that we take up the Lenten fast and engage more boldly, compassionately, generously in community.

My prayer for us this Lenten season is that we will. . .

go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;  
be of good courage;  
hold fast to that which is good;  
render to no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the fainthearted;  
support the weak;  
help the afflicted;  
honor all people;  
love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Thanks be to God.**

