

# ASH WEDNESDAY

But now...  
come back to me with all your heart,  
fasting, weeping and mourning.

Turn again to the Lord, your God,  
for he is all tenderness and compassion,

slow to anger, rich in graciousness,  
and ready to relent.

Joel 2: 12-13



CEREMONY FOR THE  
HOUSE DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES



# INTRODUCTION

**Prefect A:** We know how to use colour for special occasions. For example white and gold symbolise joy, and black indicates serious matters like mourning. Colours also remind us of our identity. Red and black for example are the colours of Aquinas College.

Today is the beginning of a special time for Christian people, a period known as Lent.

Lent begins with today's celebration of Ash Wednesday and it gets us ready for the big feasts of the Last Supper of Jesus, the death of Jesus on the cross on Good Friday, and the joy of the rising of Jesus from the dead on Easter Sunday.

The special colour we use for this Church Season is purple.

Now it is only right since Jesus did so much for us and even died on the cross that we should try and lead a good Christian life.

There are three things we should try to do during this special time.

*(i) Prayer* - spend more time finding moments of silence to thank God for what we have;

*(ii) Sacrifice* - (In silence we bring up a candle in jar) Cut down on the amount of TV we watch, or the time spent playing computer games;

*(iii) Helping others* - Do good works like supporting Project Compassion

## INVITATION TO PRAYER

**Head of House:** God you give us this holy time of lent so that we can

Learn to pray properly

Learn to fast like many people of old

Learn to share our good things with others.

It is our wish that in this time up till Easter we will learn

to love you more dearly

serve you more faithfully

and help other people in need. Amen.

**Prefect A:** We now read three sections of the Gospel according to St Mathew (6:1-6,16-18) on the three ways of preparing for Easter:

*(Three Students to Read)*

## PRAYER

**Prefect B:** Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When you pray, don’t be like those showoffs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners. They do this just to look good. I promise you that they already have their reward. When you pray, go into your room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private and he will reward you’.

*We spend a few quiet moments, in silent prayer.*

## FASTING

**Prefect C:** Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When you go without eating, don’t try to look gloomy as those showoffs do when they go without food. I promise you that they already have received their reward. Instead, comb your hair and wash your face. Then others won’t know that you are going without eating. But your father sees what is done in private, and he will reward you’.

*We spend a few quiet moments, in silent prayer.*

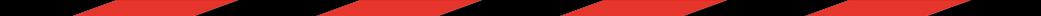
## HELPING OTHERS

**Prefect D:** Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When you do good deeds, don’t try to show off. If you do, you won’t get a reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to the poor, don’t blow a loud horn. That’s what showoffs do in the meeting places and on the street corners, because they are always looking for praise. I promise you that they already have their reward. When you give to the poor, don’t let anyone know about it. Then your gift will be given in secret. Your father knows what is done in secret and he will reward you’.

*We spend a few quiet moments, in silent prayer.*

## DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

**Prefect A:** Ashes are a very important part of our land, particularly in this hot and dry time of the year when bushfires abound. The destruction caused by bushfires and the loss of property cause much pain and suffering. Though the fires are frightening the Aboriginal people have known for centuries of the need for fire to renew the bush. We know how after the fires the land can change rapidly.



Putting ashes on our forehead as a form of penance by the Jewish people. In Old Testament times, ashes symbolised mourning and a call to conversion. Kings, Prophets and people showed repentance by covering themselves with sackcloth and ashes.

Ashes are used today to mark the beginning of Lent, the forty days preparation for Easter. It is the season of doing penance in preparation for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. Ashes remind us also of our failings and sinfulness and to signify a willingness to change our lives and to undertake a Lenten sacrifice.

The ashes are made from the burned palm branches of last year's Palm Sunday.

They have been blessed and will be now distributed by our senior students with the words: "Turn away from sinfulness and be faithful to the Gospel."

I invite them to come forward now and take the ashes and distribute them to all the students and staff. As this is a solemn ritual, we ask that you sit quietly and reflect on how you will grow during this Lenten Season.

*Ashes are distributed - background music is played*

## FINAL PRAYER:

**Head of House:** Flow through out the whole world, o song of love,  
Let your voice resound like a hundred thunders.  
Over us there now streams a marvelous contentment,  
As Christ the Lord Himself in glory is coming.  
In the little house, by the river shore,  
Let all await the victory of his death,  
Let us prepare ourselves for this great event.  
Let us renew ourselves and renew the earth. Amen

