

OUR LADY OF THE VALLEY
LIVING LENT
ASH WEDNESDAY
DAY ONE

*DON'T JUST OBSERVE LENT,
LIVE IT!*

A CATHOLIC ONLINE @CATHOLIC.ORG PROGRAM

PRAY:

Lord, purify my heart and cleanse my soul, that I may forever remain close beside you.

READING: Joel 2:12-18

12 'But now -- declares Yahweh- come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.'

13 Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to Yahweh your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and he relents about inflicting disaster.

14 Who knows if he will not come back, relent and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a libation to be presented to Yahweh your God?

15 Blow the ram's-horn in Zion! Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,

16 call the people together, summon the community, assemble the elders, gather the children, even infants at the breast! Call the bridegroom from his bedroom and the bride from her bower!

17 Let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, stand weeping between portico and altar, saying, 'Spare your people, Yahweh! Do not expose your heritage to the contempt, to the sarcasm of the nations! Why give the peoples cause to say, "Where is their God?" '

18 Then, becoming jealous over his country, Yahweh took pity on his people.

MEDITATION:

Today is Ash Wednesday, the day we receive ashes on our forehead in the shape of a cross.

Why do we do this and what does it mean?

The ashes are a symbol of our human mortality, the fact that we will die and our only survival is through Christ.

Indeed, when the priest puts the ashes on our forehead, tracing the sign of the cross with his finger, he speaks the words, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return."

This does not seem like a very nice thing for a person to say, because it is a reminder that we must die.

But it isn't a curse at all. Instead, it is a gentle reminder that we live only due to the will of God, and we will live again, only through the deliverance of Jesus Christ.

God created us from dust. Even science has demonstrated that we are all made of atoms created at the beginning of the universe. Although our bodies will return to dust, our immortal souls will live again, thanks to Christ's sacrifice, hence the sign of the cross.

Today is a day of repentance, prayer and fasting. After receiving our ashes, we should not go out, but rather go home to pray and meditate on this simple truth: Our bodies come from dust, and to dust they shall return, but our souls will live forever thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

LET US PRAY:

Lord, give me a quiet, humble heart and a clean soul so I will be ready to listen to your word.

ACTION:

Rather than going out in public, spend what time you can in prayer and contemplation. Keep up your appearance. Do not show off your ashes, or appear hungry in public. Make no public display other than to be humble and kind whatever you do.