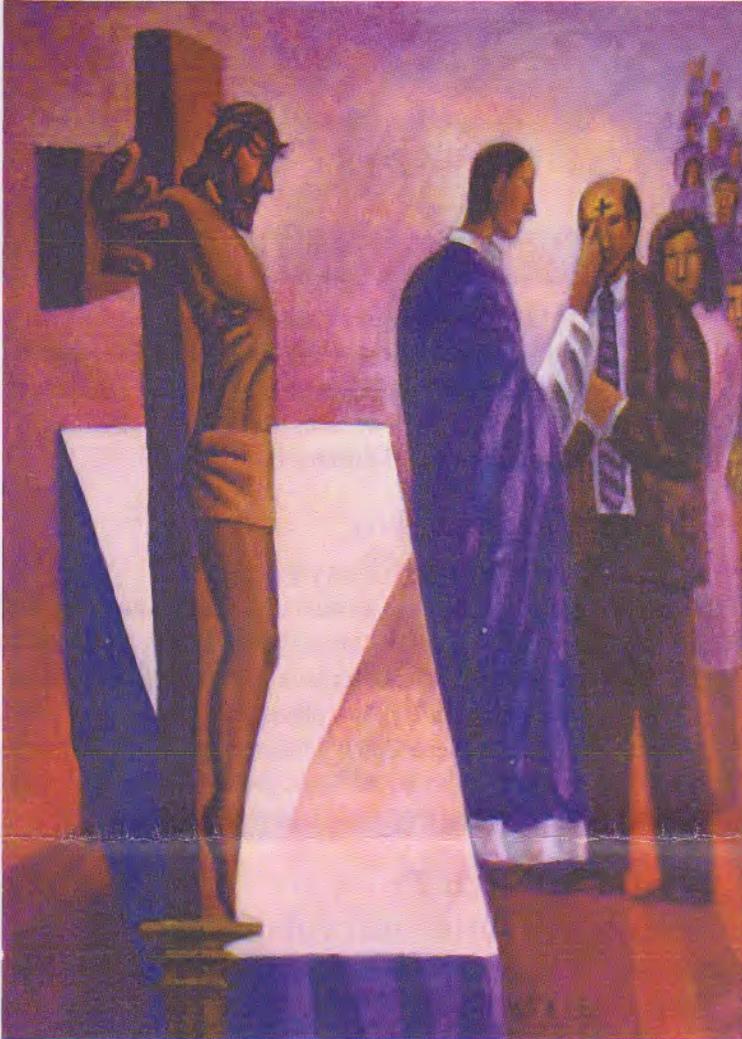


# ASH WEDNESDAY



## Be Merciful

Father of the prophets, your prophet Joel tells of your graciousness and mercy, of your slowness to anger and richness in kindness. In this acceptable time, we turn again to you, and walk with your Son on the holy road to Easter. During these holy days of Lent, may we turn away from sin to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Even when we sin, O heavenly Father, be merciful to us as we try to be merciful to each other.

With all our hearts, may we adopt a spirit of reconciliation and repentance.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

## Wednesday, March 5, 2014 Repent and Believe



Today's Readings: Joel 2:12–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 12–13, 14 and 17 (3a); 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18. Crossing the threshold of Lent on Ash Wednesday, the community and those preparing for initiation find themselves on the “porch,” leading to the great door that will be opened on the First Sunday of Lent. Today, and the days that follow until Sunday, we take small steps in prayer and reflection, and take stock of our strengths and weaknesses. Are we prepared for the Lenten journey?

Once again, we are marked with ashes in a public sign of penitence after the proclamation of the Gospel and the homily during the Ash Wednesday liturgy. We return to the Lord with our whole heart, with our whole mind, and all our

strength. With great trust, we turn ourselves over to God. Once again, we open our closed hearts to God, who showers mercy upon his people. The trumpet blast calls us all; no one is excluded.

As our brows are marked with the sign of mortality—the dust of last year's palms making a smudge of a cross on our skin—we pledge to repent and be faithful to the Gospel. In many monastic communities, the monks go up to receive their ashes barefoot, a sign of humility. Imagine how this simple, barefoot state might feel, both today and again on Good Friday when we approach the Cross for adoration. This Cross is a sign of suffering, but also of Christ's victory over sin and death.



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, March 3

#### Saint Katharine Drexel

Katharine Drexel (born in 1858) was the second American-born saint and is the patroness of racial justice. She founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and Xavier University of Louisiana, the only historically black, Roman Catholic university in the United States. In these days before Lent, some celebrate Mardi Gras, or Carnival, which originated in communities that wanted to use up meat and dairy products before the fast. It is a time of festivity (parades, masks, puppets, beads, dancing, and jazz music) before the soberness of Lent begins. Today's Readings: 1 Peter 1:3-9; Psalm 111:1-2, 5-6, 9 and 10c (5); Mark 10:17-27.

### Tuesday, March 4

#### Saint Casimir

Casimir, who died in 1484, was a teenage conscientious objector and is the patron saint of youth in Poland and Lithuania. Today is Shrove Tuesday, from the Old English word "shrive," meaning to confess sins, do penance, and receive absolution. This might be a day to "bury the Alleluia," a custom that expresses our practice of not using the word "Alleluia" during Lent. Bury a plaque, scroll, or banner inscribed with the word "Alleluia," (and dig it up again at the beginning of Easter). Today's Readings: 1 Peter 1:10-16; Psalm 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4 (2a); Mark 10:28-31.

### Wednesday, March 5

#### Ash Wednesday

During this season, the Scriptures give us images of penance and Baptism. We journey with those preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, and we also are preparing—to renew our baptismal promises at Easter. We try to act justly, pray, fast, and give alms. A good practice during Lent is Operation Rice Bowl. For more information, visit Catholic Relief Services (CRS) on the web at [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org), or call

1-888-277-7575. Donations go to needy people overseas, and you will find prayers, reflections, and recipes for simple, meatless meals on the CRS website. Today's Readings: Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17 (3a); 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18.

### Thursday, March 6

#### Create a Place for Prayer

Today's Gospel implores us to take up our cross each day and follow Jesus. In the weeks ahead, this will demand much prayer and reflection. Create a place for prayer in your home. Near a chair, on a small table, place a purple cloth, candle, Bible, crucifix, or other inspiring holy image. May your work there be blessed! Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6 (40:5a); Luke 9:22-25.

### Friday, March 7

#### Saints Perpetua and Felicity

Perpetua, a noblewoman of Carthage and mother of an infant son, and Felicity, Perpetua's slave and an expectant mother, chose death rather than renounce their faith during the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor, Septimius Severus, around the year 203. They were attacked by beasts and then beheaded, yet these holy women stood firm in the faith. On our Lenten journey, let us learn from their strength. Today's Readings: Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19 (19b); Matthew 9:14-15.

### Saturday, March 8

#### Saint John of God

John of God was born in Portugal in 1495 and founded a hospital in Granada, Spain. His assistants later formed the Order of Hospitallers of St. John of God. Today, the Order of Hospitallers serves many who are sick and suffering in a number of care facilities throughout Southern California. Like Jesus, they serve as ministers to the sick and suffering. Today's Readings: Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (11ab); Luke 5:27-32.



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*Keeping the Seasons*

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