

The Archdeacon's Corner Continued

The observance of Ash Wednesday has undergone various transformations over the centuries. In the early Middle Ages, the custom was more widely practiced among clergy and monastics. By the 10th century, it became more inclusive, reaching the lay population. Subsequently, Ash Wednesday is generally the largest “non” Sunday service in the church.

Lent, the period that Ash Wednesday initiates, spans 40 days, excluding Sundays, mirroring the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert fasting and facing temptation as narrated in the Gospels. Traditionally, Lent is characterized by introspection, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, all intended to draw us closer to God and prepare our hearts for the celebration of Easter. The ashes on Ash Wednesday serve as a tangible reminder of this journey toward spiritual growth and renewal.

In conclusion, Ash Wednesday holds deep historical and spiritual significance for Christians. It not only marks the commencement of Lent but also serves as a powerful reminder of human mortality, the call to repentance, and the opportunity for spiritual renewal. This tradition, rooted in historical practices and scriptural foundations, remains relevant as it invites us to embark on a transformative journey toward Easter.

Praying that you and yours have a blessed Ash Wednesday Service, and hoping that you have enjoyed this, and offering it in a spirit that, as Saint John put it best in 1 John 5:13, “*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*”

Praying that our Lord finds you and yours well.

Archdeacon,

The Ven. Mark Richardson