

# Ash Wednesday

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Date: 02 March 2022

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Death is not a thought that any of us like to contemplate. But on this day, the church sets aside a special day called Ash Wednesday for this very purpose.

Remember thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return. We are to remember that death is not natural. We were not created to die.

It is the result of rebellion against God. Death is the result of sin, and the sad reality is we are all sinners.

Now we can avoid or run from this reality of death for a short time, but in the end, we will all have to face our own impending death.

Remember thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return. In our gospel text this evening, we are called to go beyond the superficiality of outward remorse or external appearances of piety.

[ 1 : 0 9 ]     We are called to be people of repentance. We are called to treasure the things God treasures, not the things that the world exalts in its never-ending search for true happiness.

Fake smiles, Christian cliches, and a feel-good religion is not true Christianity. True Christianity is thinking often upon death, as morbid as that might sound, and repenting of our sins, and then receiving God's undeserved grace as we place our utter trust in Christ and in his cross.

True Christianity is embracing and surrendering to Christ and living in the joy of his victory over death and hell by way of his resurrection.

True Christianity is a certain way of sin. True Christianity is a very *sozusagen*. And that's what it means to be Christian. But it also means weeping with those who weep and calling death exactly what it is, abnormal and ugly.

And that's why the church sets aside this somber day to contemplate death. It is a day of remembering our death, but even in this grim reality, there is comfort.

[ 2 : 4 6 ]     Comfort in the one who not only died, but the one who conquered death by rising again from the dead. And he did this for our sake.

And so with ashes on our foreheads as a reminder that we will not escape the clutches of death, we mourn for our sins.

We repent. And we find true joy in the body and blood of our Savior who breathes into our dead bodies the breath of life.

And makes us temples of the Holy Spirit to serve and honor him as long as we have breath in this life. We give thanks to Jesus.

For he has made all things new and he has made us a new creation in him. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

[ 3 : 5 2 ]     Amen.