

**A Sermon for Ash Wednesday  
February 18, 2026**



*Come to New Life!*

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[Ash Wednesday – The Episcopal Church](#)

Isiah 58:1-12, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Is this the fast? Isiah asks us a good question: Is lying around in sackcloth and ashes what we should be doing when we fast? Is this acceptable to the Lord? No, he says. Rather, break the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke, share your bread with the hungry, bring the homeless poor into your house. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.

Isaiah urges us to spend our time actively, not just in self-denial. Lent is a tricky time as we contemplate the best ways to spend these 40 days. We say we “give up” something for Lent, and we therefore put the emphasis on what we don't do. But Isiah tells us to emphasize what we do do!

How do we actively approach Lent? These 40 days are a great opportunity to add meaningful activity to our everyday lives as we prepare for the joy of Easter. Forty days is long enough to establish a new habit – more exercise? More study? More prayer? More pastoral activity? It is also long enough to let go of things that are crowding our lives – excess shopping, indulgence in eating or drinking specific things, laziness. All of this, in presence or in absence, will remind us that we are in this special time of Lent.

The Church in her wisdom knows that we need this time for reflection, especially after the excesses of the holidays, to get our minds around what really matters in our spiritual lives. If you don't do this already, I urge you to establish a regular time for prayer, every day. At the same time and place, every day. Establish a routine for just you and God, or include family members, but make it regular and rich. Bring into this time a cycle of reading, such as one of the pamphlets we have in the parlor; or use some subject for reflection or meditation, as suggested in Forward Day By Day. Do this every day.

You might want to consider events from your past that trouble you. If they bug you enough, consider doing the sacrament of confession. It is indeed good for the soul.

Isiah put emphasis on helping those who are less fortunate. This parish does this all the time with outreach activities, but during Lent, we try to ramp it up. We suggest additional contributions to food programs for the hungry, such as FISH and the Akron-Canton Food Bank. You might want to increase contributions to causes that you care about, such as Doctors Without Borders, Public Broadcasting, or any of the appeals that land in your mailbox. Such activity and response remind us that others need our help. Blessings to all of you, for a rich and meaningful Lent.