

Stu(ck)space

SERIES: AGENDA FOR LENT

Season colour: GREEN

In this new series, Gerard Moloney CSsR explores the meaning of Lent and how to make the most of this holy season.

Several years ago then US vice president Joe Biden was standing alongside President Barack Obama at a news conference in Washington. Mr Biden had a large, dark mark on his forehead, and journalists at the event noticed it. The *Sky News* presenter back in London was especially curious. After the news conference had finished, she asked *Sky's* Washington correspondent if he knew what had happened the vice president. Did he have a fall? Had he bashed his forehead against something? The correspondent didn't know but promised to find out. A few minutes later, back on screen after an ad break, the suitably abashed presenter apologised for not realising it was Ash Wednesday and the blob on Mr Biden's forehead was the ashes he had received at Mass that morning.

Not very long ago, especially in Catholic countries like Ireland, it would have been impossible to not know when Ash Wednesday had come round. Almost everyone wore ashes, often the darker and more prominent the better. People were happy to wear them as they went about their business, going to work or to the shops. They wore them as a sign of faith and penance.

Sadly, that is no longer the case, and fewer people wear the ashes than even a decade ago. That is a pity because the little ceremony of the ashes is a beautiful and powerful ritual that eloquently describes what Lent is all about, indeed what life is all about for people of faith: dust and a cross. Our foreheads are marked with dust in the form of a cross. There are several formulae that can be used when the ashes are applied. One of the most common says simply: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return."

OUR NOTHINGNESS

Dust reminds us of our nothingness. It is the symbol of coming to nothing, as the German theologian Karl Rahner, once described it. Dust has no content, no form. We find it everywhere. It's anonymous, useless, shapeless, valueless. And yet dust is what we are.

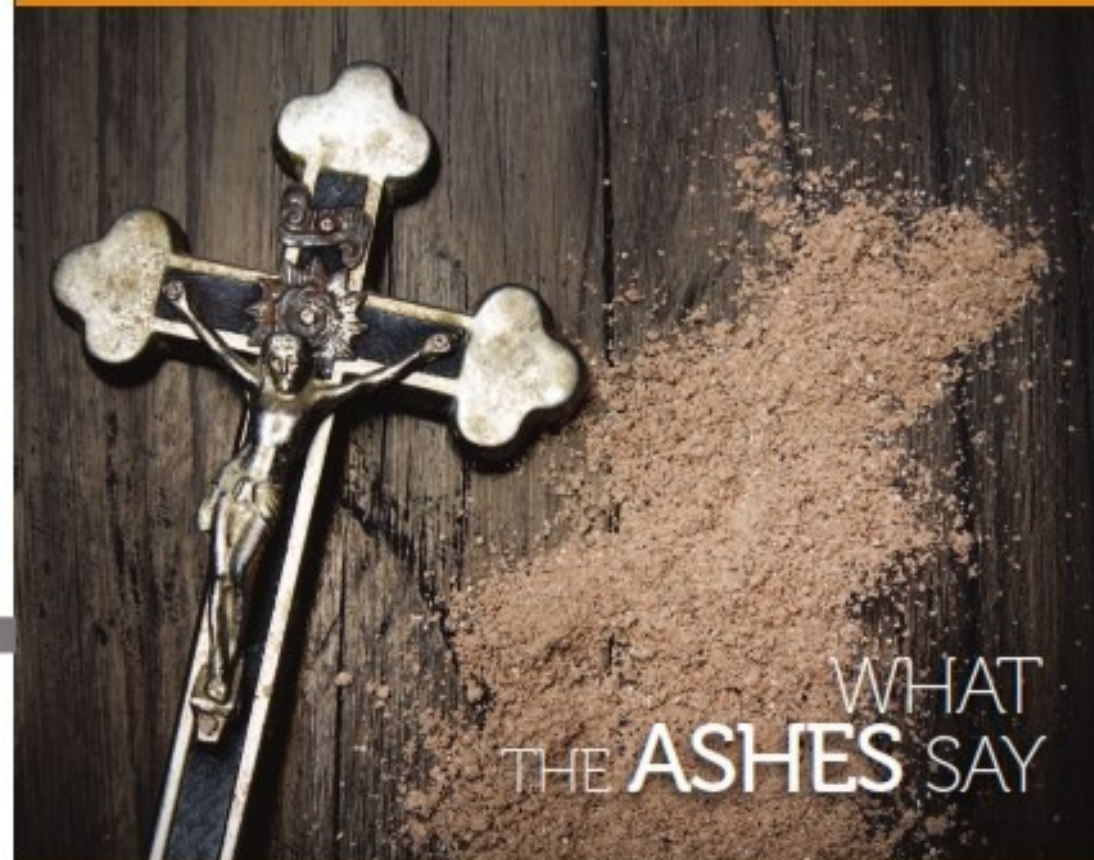
The ashes placed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday remind us that we are dust. From the moment we are born, we are in the process of dying. No matter how rich or powerful or healthy or significant or seemingly indestructible we are, we will die some day. Our bodies will become dust.

TWIN SYMBOLS

But, thank God, that is not the whole story. Because when the dust is placed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday, it is done very deliberately in the shape of the cross. The symbol of the cross reminds us that we are redeemed people. Yes, we will die one day, we will encounter setbacks and pain and loss, we remain dust, but the sign of the cross is a statement that death is not the end of our dust. The Son of God took on flesh like ours, and became dust on a cross to save us from sin and bring us to salvation. The cross is the symbol of our redemption.

Dust and cross tell us Christians all we need to know.

So, like Joe Biden, wear dust with confidence this Ash Wednesday. Wear dust not just as a public expression of faith but as a statement that through the cross of Christ we are redeemed. Death is not our end. ☩



Today's readings

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Mark 1:40-45

John's version of the gathering of the first disciples is different from what we find in the other Gospels. John emphasises that they exercise free choice in deciding to go after Jesus. The first two disciples follow Jesus of their own free will, deserting John the Baptist after he had pointed Jesus out as 'the Lamb of God.' A lamb was regarded as a sacred animal in Israel: one was offered every morning and every evening daily as a sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple, and a special offering was made on behalf of every family at Passover. Jesus will die just at the same time as the Passover Lamb is sacrificed in the Temple and his crucified body will have some of the characteristics of the lamb – his bones are not broken but he sheds his blood, just as the lamb's blood protected the Israelites. One disciple is nameless: the other is Andrew, who then recruits his brother Simon whose name Jesus immediately changes to Peter.

GOD'S WORD TODAY



The Season of Lent is almost upon us. Next Wednesday the ashes will be distributed in churches around the country. This ritual is more than just an exercise to mark the beginning of Lent, it is also a profound statement of faith.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

11th February 2018
World Day of the Sick
Day of Prayer for Temperance

A leper was an outcast, an untouchable. The love of Christ brought such people back into the community. We who follow Christ are called never to ostracise another, never to isolate those who don't fit into our ways. Our task is to help them along.

CHOOSE LIFE

"It really is important for us to affirm that what's in the womb are babies that are just not born yet. They are not potential persons but persons with potential; they are developing humans."

Bishop Brendan Leahy

The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference produce weekly newsletters called *Choose Life* to encourage discussion in families on the value of every human life. Issue Two is now available at www.elphindiocese.ie

**HUNGER LUNCH FOR TROCAIRE
 IN GILLOOLY HALL**

**THIS ASH WEDNESDAY – 14th FEBRUARY
 FROM 10.30 AM TO 2.00 PM**

To mark Ash Wednesday as a Day of Fast and Abstinence and the beginning of Lent please support our Hunger Lunch in aid of Trocaire's Lenten Campaign. (delicious soup with fresh bread rolls) Suggested donation €3. All welcome.

PASTORAL MESSAGE FROM BISHOP KEVIN

Bishop Kevin's pastoral message "The Gift of Life – A Shared Responsibility" is available to read online at www.elphindiocese.ie

IMPORTANT PUBLIC MEETING to be held on the Saturday 17th February at 7 pm. Subject : To Protect & Save the 8th Amendment. Venue: Clayton Hotel - Canice Major Chapel. Speakers: Bernadette Smyth- Precious Life ,Belfast. Declan Ganley - Entrepreneur. Dr Judy Ceannt - MB,DCH ,DOBST. All Most Welcome. Sligo For Life.

LEGION OF MARY Conference for Young Adults with a focus on the importance of faith on Saturday, 17th February in the Gillooly Hall, Sligo. Speakers: **Elma Walsh**, mother of Donal Walsh, whose life-affirming message before his passing continues to give hope to people no matter what the difficulty and Fr. Philip Mulryan - a former Premiership and International footballer. The Conference starts at 10am and will finish at 5pm. Cost €15 which includes lunch. Don't hesitate to contact Moira (086 0721694) or Alan (085 1324616) if you have any queries, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

SUNDAY READINGS for 18th February: 1st Reading: Gen. 9:8-15; 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22; Gospel: Mk. 1:12-15.

BINGO, GILLOOLY HALL, TONIGHT

SUNDAY 11th February at 9.00pm With a JACKPOT of €3,200 Raffle at interval with refreshments available. All welcome.

PARISH OFFICE at St. Mary's Presbytery ☎ 071 9162670

Please note that the parish office will open to the public during the coming week at the following times:
 Monday - Thursday 9.30am - 4pm & Friday 9.30am - 2pm.

SLIGO CATHEDRAL PARISH – 2200 FAMILIES

4th February **PARISH ENV: €2,724** **PL/STAND. ORD: €1,340**
 THANK YOU for your contribution.

LENT IN THE CATHEDRAL 2018

**THEME: "STATIONS OF THE CROSS"
 ASH WEDNESDAY-14th February**

Masses in the Cathedral will be celebrated at 8.00 a.m.; 10.30 a.m.; 1.05 p.m and 7.00 p.m.

Hunger Lunch in Gillooly Hall from 10.30am to 2.00pm
STATIONS OF THE CROSS – LENT 2018

After the 10.30 a.m. Mass on each Friday during Lent there will be a short meditation on the Way of the Cross. All are encouraged to attend.

SCRIPTURE SHARING GROUPS reflections available to download from www.elphindiocese.ie/len Other prayer booklets available from Justin Harkin, contact justin@elphindiocese.ie / 087 6171526. Support also available for new groups.

SHORT LENTEN REFLECTIONS by Fr. Niall Ahern offering a spiritual Lenten journey now available to listen or as Podcasts at www.elphindiocese.ie/reflections

LENTEN PREPARATION EVENING in Summerhill College, Sligo on Tuesday 13th February from 8pm to 9.15pm. Guest presenters will be Sr. Michelle & Sr. Megan Maria, Servant Sisters, Roscommon and the sessions will also encompass some prayer and a cuppa.

CATHEDRAL LENTEN SCRIPTURE SHARING GROUP will meet at 7.30pm on the Thursdays in Lent (excluding Holy Thursday), starting 15th February. Upstairs—Gillooly Hall. You are all welcome.

THE WAY OF GENTLENESS a personal enrichment journey for Lent will take place in St Patrick's Church Strandhill on Mondays February 19th and 26th and March 5th, 12th and 19th.

INTRODUCING CHRISTIAN MEDITATION TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE The day will be of particular interest to teachers and parents. It will take a practical, hands-on approach and participants will leave with the knowledge of how to introduce the practice to children in a straightforward and deeply meaningful way. Led by Dr. Noel Keating, it will be held on Friday 23rd February at Star of the Sea Centre, Mullaghmore. To book: staroftheseacentre@gmail.com or 071 9176722. Cost €20.00 (incl hot lunch).

POPE FRANCIS ON THE FAMILY You are invited to sessions of guided discussion and reflection on family life in preparation for the World Meeting of Families 2018 in Summerhill College Library on Wednesdays 28 February, 07 March, 14 March 8pm – 9pm These sessions will be in an informal, friendly atmosphere, followed by a cuppa. Everyone is welcome - we are all family!

**OFFICIAL FAMILY PRAYER FOR
 WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 2018**

God, our Father,

We are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son, One Family, in the Spirit of your love. Bless us with the joy of love. Make us patient and kind, gentle and generous, welcoming to those in need. Help us to live your forgiveness and peace. Protect all families with your loving care, Especially those for whom we now pray:
 (We pause and remember family members and others by name)
 Increase our faith, Strengthen our hope, Keep us safe in your love, Make us always grateful for the gift of life that we share.
 This we ask, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Upcoming **EVENTS**

THE WEEK AHEAD

Saturday 17th February **Confessions** from 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

DATES TO REMEMBER

ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY Next meeting will take place tomorrow, Monday, 12th February, immediately after the 10.30am Mass in the Upper Room of the Cathedral Sacristy. New members are invited.

SLIGO ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOC. Meeting - 2.30pm in the Presbyterian Hall, Church Street, Tuesday, 13th February. New members welcome.

FR. FLANAGAN PRAYER GROUP Next Meeting is Tuesday, 13th February at 8.00 p.m. in St. Mary's Presbytery. All are most welcome.

CHARITY PANCAKE DAY at Henry's Bar, Cashelgarron, this Tuesday, 13th February from 12noon to 6.00pm in aid of North West Simon Community, please support this local homeless charity in Sligo.

ANAM CARA the organisation that supports bereaved parents, is holding a Bereavement Information Evening on Thursday 15th February at 7:30pm in the Family Centre, Chapel Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. This is a free event and open to all bereaved parents. As Anam Cara will need to confirm numbers for teas, coffees, etc, please RSVP to info@anamcara.ie before Wednesday 14th February or call the Information Line on 085 2888 888.

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 2018 For all information about the upcoming World Meeting of Families 2018, check out their website www.worldmeeting2018.ie

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY "An opportunity for couples to celebrate the depth and beauty of love in a way that goes beyond commercial interests" Pope Francis So instead of buying a gift for each other, couples commit to time together – a meal, a walk, a remembrance of how you met, and so on. Given that St. Valentine's day falls this year on Ash Wednesday this is a good year to think outside the chocolate box!

FRANCISCAN FRIARS OF THE RENEWAL MINI-MISSION

A Lenten Mini-Mission will take place in St. Anne's Parish, Cranmore Road, Sligo from February Sat 17th - Thursday 22nd. The Mission will begin on Saturday 17th with the opening **Mission Mass at 6.30pm followed by the Main Mission Session/healing, Sunday at 6.30pm followed by Mission Session/healing, then Monday to Thursday with Mission Mass at 6.15pm followed by Mission Session and Healing Service at 7pm.** For more info visit www.stanneschurchsligo.ie/ or www.cfrfranciscanfriars.co.uk We look forward to seeing you!

anniversary & remembrances

DAY	8.00 a.m. Mass	10.30 a.m. Mass
MON 12 th	SANDRA KENAHAN	MICHAEL GILMARTIN
TUES 13 th	JIMMY MCHUGH	1st Anniversary JOE MORRISON & AGNES MORRISON (3 rd)
WED 14 th	SPECIAL INTENTION	MARTIN MCLOUGHLIN
THURS 15 th	SALLY HARTE	EAMON HARGADON
FRI 16 th	MICHAEL CASEY	Month's Mind LENA BOHAN
SAT 17 th	MICHAEL MASTERSON	Month's Mind ANGELA COSTELLO

MONTH'S MIND MASS for FR. DES O'CONNOR will be celebrated at the 1.30pm Mass on Saturday, 17th February.

MONTH'S MIND MASS for MARY SCANLON will be celebrated at the 7.30pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, 17th February.

rest in peace Your prayers are asked for the repose of the soul of: JOHN JOE KILFEATHER, Nazareth Village. *May God grant him eternal rest and comfort and console his bereaved family and friends.*