

## Ash Wednesday 2026

The season of Lent is an opportunity for us to renew and strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ. When can grow in the Lord by going to the next level, becoming more consistent and habitual, and moving from rebellion or indifference to by being more in tune with Jesus and His will. We can do this in a variety of important and life-giving ways such as prayer, service, charity, and sacrifice.

Mindful of the Lord's words to the prophet Joel, "Return to me with your whole heart," I would like to offer a recommendation. For our Lenten resolution, we work on our primary vice and seek to develop the virtue that is opposite of it. Our Catholic faith defines vice as "a firm, habitual, and deeply ingrained attachment to a particular evil, acquired through repetition of sinful acts." On the other hand, virtue is habitual attachment to actions that are good and pleasing in the eyes of God.

In our Catholic Christian tradition there are seven primary vices from which every form of sin originates. I would like to share these seven vices along with the seven virtues that we are called to move toward. We are called to journey from pride to humility, anger to forgiveness, envy to gratitude, greed to generosity, lust to purity or chastity, gluttony to self-control, and sloth or laziness to being diligent and conscientious.

Out of the seven capital vices, what is presently our primary one? How can we strive to overcome it? I have some ideas.

Number 1:

Keep in mind that since the vice is deep rooted and habitual, it will usually take time to live into more sustained progress and fidelity.

Number 2:

Identify the area or areas of our lives that our primary vice is most present and active. Prayerfully reflect on “why” we are so vulnerable to that particular vice.

Number 3:

Read about and reflect on the negative effects of our primary vice on our relationship with God, others, and ourselves.

Number 4:

Read about and reflect on the virtue that is the opposite of the vice we struggle with. May we give special attention to the positive effect it can have on our relationships with God, others, and ourselves.

Number 5:

Daily ask Jesus to remove this vice from our hearts and lives. As we keep bringing this petition to the Lord, He will begin to answer in two ways. He will offer us His grace, or personal help through a desire to change, less interest in our vice, reduced fulfillment and peace when we choose to embrace it, and by giving us strength. He will also provide us with daily opportunities to refrain from this vice and develop the opposite virtue. So, when we start praying about our primary vice begin to pay close attention. The opportunities will start to arise. This is Jesus

answering our prayer and providing us with the opportunity to move from vice to virtue, with the help of His grace. We will experience the highest level of benefit from this prayer petition, if it is part of an overall renewed commitment to daily prayer. As we habitually embrace daily prayer, we will gradually grow in spiritual and moral strength and endurance. God is making us strong and allowing us to share in His strength.

Number 6:

Develop practical goals to overcome our primary vice and to grow in the virtue that is the opposite of our vice. It is important to create easily manageable and achievable goals at first. By taking baby steps, we are more likely to taste the joy of personal and spiritual growth. This joy helps to build up and renew our spirit. It inspires us to seek out and become more open to Christ's healing and delivering love. It deepens our sense of hope. As we mature in Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our goals can become more challenging and significant. We can begin to stretch ourselves more.

### Number 7:

Intentionally practice overcoming our primary vice and developing virtue amid our daily responsibilities and interactions. By doing so, we bring it to the forefront of our consciousness and spiritual awareness.

### Number 8:

When we fall, we do not beat ourselves up, make excuses, or easily give up. Instead, we humble ourselves before Jesus and ask for His forgiveness, help, and wisdom. Spurred on by love, we realize that every moment, and every day, is an opportunity for a new beginning with Christ. We trust in His mercy and love. It is important that we do not become overly preoccupied or paralyzed by our need for immediate success. Instead, our focus is on our relentless striving and Jesus's faithful love and grace.

### Number 9:

We celebrate our small and inconsistent victories, without allowing our remaining sinfulness and imperfections to steal our joy. We see Christ at work in us, especially through our growing desires to become

a new creation, and those fleeting moments when we taste and savor perfection. We give thanks to Jesus Christ and all the people that may have assisted us. We rejoice in the growing sense of interior abundance that comes from striving to “be” and “do” our best “in Christ.”

During our Lenten Season 2026, may we increasingly experience the glorious freedom and empowerment of the children of God, as our primary vice is transformed into a virtue that blesses God, others, and ourselves. As Jesus proclaimed, “I came that you might have life, and have it in abundance.”