

## **Meditation and Imposition of Ashes...**

Father Richard Rohr says that in his studies of the nearly universal practice of male initiation in native societies, he found a pattern so consistent that he “knew it had to be proceeding from the deep unconscious and the Holy Spirit.”

The young mens’ arrogant posturing was dangerous for the community, so in various ways, they were forced into immediate contact with their own death. They were required to connect to the earth (humus) to remind them of their humanity and to teach them humility. Often in these native communities, the young men were signed with the ashes of death to give them sympathy for the humanity they shared with others and a desire for the full glory of life.

We do not come to God this (or any) day in the arrogant posture that we have our lives under control or that we are not in need of help, or that we are somehow worthy of God’s love. It is exactly God’s nature of steadfast and unconditional love that allows God to incorporate the negative and transform us in and through God. (from Rohr’s essay in *God For Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Lent and Easter*)

What a relief to let the arrogant posturing go and bring our broken, imperfect, and hurt selves to the God who loves us. What a gift to “return to the Lord, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love...”

Give thanks for the gift of being centered in God’s boundless compassion and come forward when you are ready for the imposition of ashes.

Then, go in peace, trusting in the love that will sustain you through the Lenten journey.

# Ash Wednesday Guided Meditation\*



**EAST STROUDSBURG  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH FEBRUARY 17, 2021**

# A Lenten Invitation...

*Lent invites us to stop participating in whatever protects us from having to face the chaos inside of us that we typically deny or simply refuse to face. Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness was a fast that reflected a deprivation of all the normal supports that protected him from feeling, full force, his vulnerability, dependence, and need to surrender in deeper trust to God. (God For Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Lent and Easter)*

*As you work your way through this meditation, feel free to write or think, to grieve, to cry, to be raw and desperate...knowing that when we put aside all that keeps us in control (theoretically), then God can be present and compassionate, and we can rest in God's strength.*

## Center Your Real Self in God's Compassion

Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent offer an opportunity to fast from all those things that add to the chaos inside of us that keep us separated us from God and from each other. Turn your heart and mind to God as we hear the words from the second chapter of Joel.

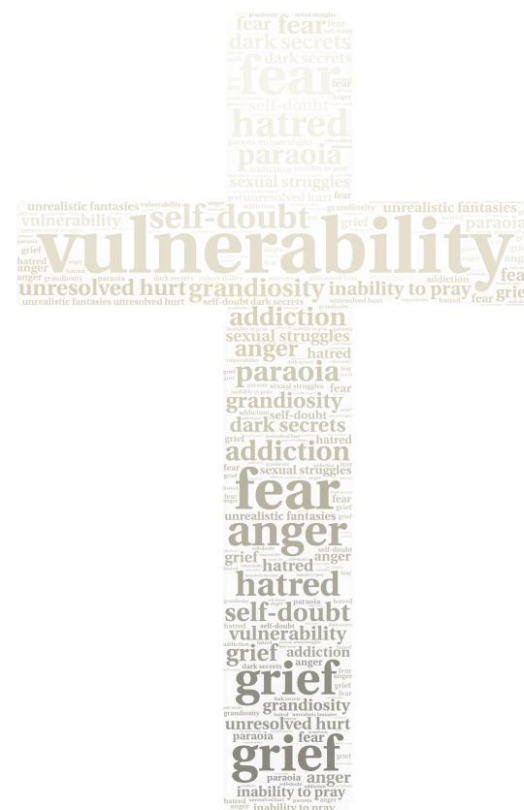
*Blow the trumpet in Zion: sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—*

*a day of darkness and gloom*

*a day of clouds and thick darkness...*

*Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning:*

Let yourself feel what you try to forget or hide. Identify your struggles honestly and without self-judgment.



Note that God asks to receive your pain and your struggle. Attempts at perfection and control are a hinderance to blessing.

*Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love...*

\*meditation courtesy of Rev. Beth Utley