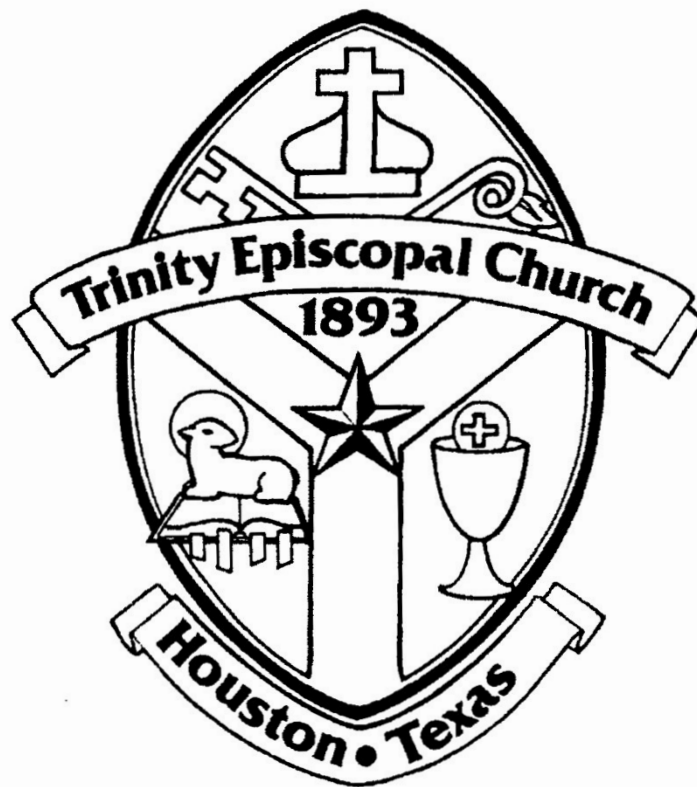


# DUST AND ASHES

FEBRUARY 14, 2024



The Reverend Hannah E. Atkins Romero, Rector  
The Reverend Luz Cabrera Montes, Associate Rector  
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***Making God's Presence Real  
By Sharing Christ's Life-Changing Love***

Dust and Ashes: An Ash Wednesday self-guided prayer walk for all ages.

# DUST

## THE FIRST STATION

*Remember that you are dust...*

### READ

A story of creation.

Genesis 1: 4a-7 (Robert Alter translation)

*On the day the Lord God made earth and heavens, no shrub of the field being yet on the earth and no plant of the field yet sprouted [...] there was no human to till the soil [...] then the Lord God fashioned the human, humus from the soil, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living creature.*

There is a pun in the Hebrew ...'adam means human, 'adamah means soil or earth, so the Genesis account cleverly says that we are 'adam from 'admah "humans" from "humus," creatures from the earth...or literally earthlings.

### RESPOND

Reach your hand into the bowl of soil...

Reflect on the substance from which all life comes...

Breathe deeply and reflect on the breath of God, the gift of life that God provides with each breath.

### PRAY

Say the Prayer silently or aloud.

*O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 259)*

**MOVE** to the next station—**WATER**.

# WATER

## THE SECOND STATION

*Remember that you are beloved...*

### READ

A story of Jesus' baptism

Luke 3: 21-22 (New Revised Standard)

*Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'*

Without water there would be no life. We are made of dust and water and breath sustains us. Like the blood in our veins, water is the circulatory system of our planet. Our bodies are about 60% water.

Reflect on all the ways water is used in your life...

Reflect on all the ways water shows up in our scripture:

- God moved over the waters at creation...
- Moses led the people out of Egypt through water...
- Jesus is baptized in the water...

If you were baptized it was with water...it is one of the ways God says to us, "you are my beloved, with you I am well pleased." Have you ever heard God say this to you?

### RESPOND

Dip your fingers into the water and remember your own baptism; touch your forehead with the water or make the sign of the cross. Hear God say, "You are my beloved."

### PRAY

Say the Prayer silently or aloud.

*We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life. We thank you, God, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. May we always remember that we are your beloved. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 306)*

**MOVE** to the next station—OIL

# OIL

## THE THIRD STATION

*Remember that you are anointed...*

### READ

A story of anointing

Luke 3: 21-22 (God's Word, My Voice).

*Six days before Passover, Jesus and his disciples were in Bethany, where Lazarus and his sisters lived. (Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, remember?) Martha put on a lovely dinner for them. After supper, Mary brought out some very expensive perfumed oil and massaged Jesus' feet with it. Then she wiped them dry with her hair. The whole house was full of the fragrance. Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, the one who was going to betray Jesus to the authorities, ruined the moment by saying, "I can't believe you didn't sell this perfume and give money to the poor." [...] Jesus said, "Back off. Leave her alone. She honors me with this beautiful perfume and her care of me. She bought that perfume to prepare me for my burial. You always have the opportunity to help poor people. You won't always have me here with you in the flesh."*

Anointing with oil is an ancient practice. Kings and queens, priests and other rulers are anointed and marked as special Rulers are anointed on their heads. Mary anoints Jesus' feet to indicate the kind of ruler he is...not one who rules over people but one who serves people. In many cultures, soon after death the body is anointed with oil and perfume. Jesus says this oil is also to be used for his body after he dies.

Chrism (*kri•zm*) is a special oil made from spices and fragrances. It is blessed by the bishop each Holy Week during the Chrism Mass. It is used at baptism to indicate the seal of Holy Spirit on the forehead. If you have been baptized, you probably received a cross of chrism on your forehead. Remember that the ashes we put on today go on top of that anointing...nothing, not even our own death, can take away the love of God, and the sign that we are beloved.

### RESPOND

Smell the oil. If you wish dip your finger in it and trace a cross on your forehead, or the palms of your hand. Remember that you are anointed.

### PRAY

Say the Prayer silently or aloud.

*Almighty God, we thank you that by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself, and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to your service. Renew in us the covenant you made with us at our baptism. Send us forth in the power of that Spirit to perform the service you set before us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 309).*

**Move to the next station—LIGHT**

# LIGHT

## THE FOURTH STATION

*Remember that you are light...*

### READ

Two stories of light

John 1:1-5 (NRSV)

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

Matthew 5:14-16 (NRSV)

*"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*

Christ is the light of the world. On Easter we light a special candle called the Paschal candle. It represents the light of Christ. You have that light inside of you. You let Christ's light shine when you follow Jesus in the Way of Love. When we light a candle it can remind of us God's light. It can remind us that Jesus is close. It can also remind us of the people we love but don't see any more...those who have died. Candles can remind us that everything that lives dies, but the light still shines.

### RESPOND

Light a candle for someone you love, or yourself, or any other prayer intention and remember that Christ is always present.

### PRAY

Say the Prayer silently or aloud.

*Giver of life and love: Be present at this hour as we pause to rest in your love. Fill us with the memory of your goodness, bless us with the grace of your light, and send us out again with renewed faithfulness to show your love to the world. Amen. (Daily Prayer for All Seasons, p. 28)*

**Move** to the next station—ASHES

# ASHES

## THE FIFTH STATION

*Remember that you are mortal...*

### READ

A passage of scripture

Genesis 3:19

*By the sweat of your brow  
Shall you get bread to eat,  
Until you return to the ground—  
For from it you were taken.  
For dust you are,  
And to dust you shall return.*

The ashes we use today are made from the dried palms left from last year's Palm Sunday celebration. The ashes are a reminder of our mortality; that we are made from dust and will one day die and return to dust. They remind us that all things pass away...death is a natural part of life...everything returns to the earth. When we put ashes on our forehead, they go over our baptismal seal which reminds us that death is not the end...we return to the earth, and we return to God, the journey continues...

### RESPOND

Put your thumb in the ashes, and place ashes on the forehead of someone with you saying, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." If you are by yourself, use the mirror, or ask in the office and someone will apply them for you.

### PRAY

Say the Prayer silently or aloud.

*O God who gave us life,  
And in whose arms we die,  
You know us as we are,  
Understand what we have been,  
And see what we shall become.  
We give you back our lives  
That you may make them new:  
Generous, committed to hope,  
And fearless to do your will;  
That your whole creation  
May live to praise your name  
Now and for ever. Amen.  
(All Desires Known, Janet Morley, p. 140)*

**Move to the next station—CROSS**

# CROSS

## THE SIXTH STATION

*Remember that life is full of joy and difficulties, and God is with you...*

### RESPOND

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, which ends in Holy Week when we remember the story of the cross...the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Touch the wood of the cross, feel the reality of it.

In Lent, sometimes people give up things because they feel these things are keeping them from growing closer to God...Sometimes people take on something new, if they feel that a new practice would draw them closer to God. If you were to give yourself permission to do one thing that would draw you closer to God in these 40 days, what would it be? Write it down on a piece of paper and take that with you. Make that your Lenten practice.

### PRAY

Say the Prayer silently or aloud.

*Living God,  
Take our hands,  
Take our lives,  
Ordinary as wheat or cornmeal,  
Daily as bread—  
Our stumbling generosity,  
Our simple actions,  
And find them good enough  
To help prepare the feast  
For all your people.  
Amen.  
(All Desires Known, Janet Morley, p. 137)*

### READ

the story of the resurrection

Mark 16: 1-7 (NRSV)

*When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.'*

**Move to the last station—at the high altar**

# THE END?

## THE LAST STATION

*Remember that God's story doesn't end, and you are with God always.*

On the high altar are letters spelling the word "Alleluia" which were decorated at the Shrove Tuesday supper. We then "buried the Alleluia" under the black cloth where it will remain until Easter. We don't say or sing the word "Alleluia" during Lent or Holy Week.

Lent is forty days long representing 40 days Jesus spent in the desert to seek God's will. Then he taught, preached, and healed to show God's love.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday: When are marked by ashes because we came from dust and we return to dust.

Lent ends with Palm Sunday; a parade with branches when Jesus came into Jerusalem on the first day of Holy Week.

In Holy Week we remember the Last Supper, Jesus's death and then celebrate his resurrection at Easter.

During Lent and Holy Week we "bury the alleluia," so that we may prepare our hearts and minds to be able to see the kingdom of God, and to remember that Jesus lived and died and rose for us. The Alleluia remains buried here to remind us that the promise of God is for ever, and that God is with us even when we can't see or feel God. It is a reminder that the journey with God and to God goes far beyond death...and resurrection is always possible even when it is hard to see.

## PRAY

Say the Blessing for Ash Wednesday silently or aloud.

*May the God who binds up the broken-hearted,  
Who proclaims freedom to the captive  
And promises justice  
To all who mourn its loss,  
Bless you with beauty instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness in place of grief,  
And instead of your spirit of despair,  
A garment of unending praise;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.*

*(All Desires Know, Janet Morley)*

**Go in peace.**