



## Why Do People Draw a Cross on Their Forehead

People Draw a Cross on Their Forehead, particularly on Ash Wednesday, as a Christian practice symbolizing their belonging to Jesus Christ and serving as a visible reminder of their mortality and need for repentance, with the cross shape signifying the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; it marks the beginning of Lent, a period of reflection and fasting leading up to Easter.

### Key points about the cross on the forehead:

#### Meaning:

The cross represents Jesus Christ's sacrifice and the believer's commitment to him.

#### Ash Wednesday:

This practice is most commonly observed on Ash Wednesday, where ashes are placed on the forehead in the shape of a cross.

#### Symbol of penance:

The ashes are a visual representation of mourning and a call to repent for one's sins.

#### Act of devotion:

Making the sign of the cross on the forehead is a way to outwardly express one's faith and devotion to God.

## Ash Wednesday: Wearing Our Faith on Our Foreheads

If there ever is a day of the year when you can spot Catholics at a glance, Ash Wednesday is it. It is the one time when Catholics literally **wear their faith on their foreheads**. In fact, Masses on Ash Wednesday are better attended than Masses on most holy days, except Christmas.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent for Catholics. **The ashes we receive on our forehead in the shape of a cross serve as an outward sign of our sinfulness and need for penance.** The ashes also symbolize our mortality, a reminder that one day we will die and our bodies will return to dust.

**The tradition of receiving ashes** has its origins in the Old Testament, where sinners performed **acts of public penance**. It was Pope Urban II who in the 11th century recommended that all Catholics take part in the practice of receiving ashes on Ash Wednesday. In the 12th century it became customary that the ashes used on Ash Wednesday were made by burning the previous year's palm branches.

### Ash Wednesday is also a day of fasting and abstinence for Catholics.

According to Church law, Catholics older than the age of 14 are supposed to abstain from meat. In addition, those between the ages of 18 and 59, not including pregnant or nursing mothers, should **eat only one full meal**. Smaller amounts of food—not as much as a full meal—may be eaten in the morning and either at lunchtime or dinner, depending on when you eat your full meal.

### More than Rules

As long as I can remember, Lent (Carême - mùa Chay) always seemed to be about rules. What's so spiritual about following a bunch of rules? I often wondered.

The truth is, I now understand, Lent is about much more than rules. How many times in your life have you thought, If only I could change things/do things differently? Well, that's where Lent can help. **Ash Wednesday** serves as our **wake-up call** at the **beginning of Lent**. It is a time to **identify the things we have done wrong**

or wish we could change or do differently. Then we can choose to do something about them during ***the next 40 days of Lent.***

And what about those rules such as abstinence and fasting? Those serve as gentle reminders to stay the course.

***Lent is a journey, beginning on Ash Wednesday.*** Here are some ideas to help you and your family along the way:

- Try to attend Ash Wednesday services together as a family. Most parishes offer evening Masses to help accommodate working parents and busy families.
- Attend a ***penance service*** at your parish. Going to confession provides a wonderful opportunity for a fresh start spiritually. Plus, if your kids see you partaking in the sacrament, they'll be more likely to go themselves.
- Focus on the meaning behind your ***fasting and abstinence***. For instance, if having a particular food is a special treat for your family, the point of why you are abstaining from meat is probably lost. Try to find another meatless alternative for dinner.
- Collect the palm branches you received last year on Palm Sunday, gather your family together and ***burn the palms***. Hold a family prayer service ***with the ashes***. When you are done, do not throw out the excess ashes, but rather bury them in your garden. If you don't feel comfortable conducting such a ritual yourself, check with your parish to see if it is collecting last year's palm branches.
- Since Ash Wednesday is a reminder of the need for spiritual renewal and change in our lives, take some time to review your life and name those areas where you need renewal. Once you have identified these areas, identify ways to make a change.

### **For Teens: Making Amends**

The ***concept of penance*** (pénitence - chjù tòi) is an integral part of the Ash Wednesday custom. By wearing the ashes, we are reminded of our sinfulness and that when we have done wrong, we should seek to make amends.

The Church provides us one way to do this through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We should also, however, remember the ***value of reconciliation*** in our everyday lives. For instance, if you hurt someone's feelings by spreading gossip, you should not only apologize, but also try to make amends by clearing up any rumors or misinformation you helped spread.

Ash Wednesday is a wonderful ***opportunity to begin anew***, and also serves as a good reminder of how we should behave the whole year through. It gives us an opportunity to slow down, find oneness with God, and allow God's grace to guide our actions throughout the year.

### **For Kids: Witnessing New Life**

With the arrival of spring comes an abundance of new life. Just as Ash Wednesday serves as a reminder of a new beginning, take an opportunity to notice and enjoy all the new beginnings surrounding you.

- Write down all the new events you see taking place, such as flowers blooming, a new baby either in your family or a friend's, a new job for someone or natural phenomena, such as bird nests and eggs, bunnies or ducks at a local pond.
- Share your list with family members at mealtime or another time when you are all gathered together. Invite them to witness all the new beginnings surrounding them, too.

**Surprised by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who gave an interview on Fox with a cross on his forehead**

The appearance of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio caused a sensation during an interview with Fox News on March 6, 2025, after he appeared with a cross painted on his forehead.

During the interview, Rubio addressed several key issues, including the ongoing developments in Ukraine, the escalating crisis in the Middle East, and Donald Trump's recent address to Congress.

### **Why Rubio Showed Up with a Cross on His Forehead:**

Rubio's appearance with a cross on his forehead is linked to Ash Wednesday, which occurred the day before the interview. Ash Wednesday is a significant day for many Catholic Christians, marking the start of Lent, a period of fasting and spiritual preparation. On this day, in many countries, believers receive a cross of ashes on their foreheads, made from the blessed palms of the previous Palm Sunday.



*Marco Rubio Appears on Fox News with Ash Wednesday Cross:*

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio was seen on Fox News with an ashen cross on his forehead, marking Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent.

As a practicing Catholic, Rubio's appearance aligned with the tradition of Ash Wednesday. Rubio's decision to appear with the ash cross did not go unnoticed on social media. His image sparked a variety of reactions, highlighting both the religious significance and the political implications of his public display.

Some social media users **expressed pride in Rubio's** open display of faith, seeing it as a reflection of his values as the head of American diplomacy. Conversely, others criticized him, accusing him of engaging in "propaganda" that could be interpreted as favoring Russia or promoting a "religious war."

The discussion also took a lighter tone with some sarcastic remarks, like one user's comment: "Our parents used to paint crosses on our heads when we were bad kids."

This event underscores the intersection of personal faith and public office, continuing to be a topic of discussion across various platforms.