

Ash Wednesday Bonfire by Jerusalem Greer

Why is this Faith Practice Important?

In many liturgical traditions Ash Wednesday is marked by a formal worship service in which the priest or church leader makes the sign of the cross on the foreheads of the congregants. The purpose of this service is mark the beginning of the Lenten season of repentance and reflection.

The following practice can be done around a small fire pit in any backyard, on a roof top, on the beach, on your deck, or even around a group of candles or indoor fireplace. The point is not how grand your fire, but instead it is that you make time for the occasion in the first place.



Materials Needed

- A fire
- Marshmallows and sticks
- Paper and pencils, markers, or crayons

How to Do it

Start with Marshmallows! Have you ever watched a marshmallow burn to a crisp? A marshmallow that has been burned on the outside is still soft and white on the inside, so much softer than it was before. This is a great tactile example of how God uses the “refining fires” of life (pain, loss, change, love, etc.) to soften our hearts and loosen our grip on the illusion of control. Consider roasting marshmallows to a crisp, explaining this illustration as you do so.

Burning of Confessions: Provide all those in attendance with pencil and paper and prompt each person to write down those things that they would like to confess, to have burned away from their past, that they feel a call to repent of. Make sure to have markers and crayons on hands for children. Have younger children draw out their confessions.

Burn the confessions in the fire, using the steps and liturgy on the following page.

Put Away the Fire, Ashes to Ashes: After the fire has cooled, return the ashes to the earth, perhaps in a garden area, where something new will spring from them.

Resources for this Practice

Liturgy for Burning the Confessions

Have everyone crumple up and toss their confessions into the fire, or put them on the end of a roasting stick. As they add their confessions to the fire, have each person recite this Psalm:

*“God, make a fresh start in me, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life.”
(Psalm 51:10, The Message).*

After everyone has added their confessions to the fire, take time to watch them burn in silence. Once the papers are no longer visible, say to each other:

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”



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About the Author

The above practice, and more like it, can be found in the book [A Homemade Year: The Blessings of Cooking, Crafting and Coming Together](#). Jerusalem Jackson Greer is a writer, speaker, nest-fluffer, and novice farm-gal. Jerusalem lives with her husband and two sons on a little farm in Shady Grove, Arkansas. As a family, they are attempting to live a slower version of modern life. She blogs about all of this and more at <http://jerusalemgreer.com>.