

THE DIOCESE OF CHICAGO

St James Commons
65 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611-2728

312.751.4200
www.episcopalchicago.org

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Dear Friends,

I want to encourage you to take the liturgy to the streets! "Ashes to Go" is a somewhat irreverent title for a very serious attempt to make use of our rich liturgical tradition in a day of public witness and evangelization.

In the last couple of years, various congregations throughout the diocese have made use of Ash Wednesday to offer the prayer of the church to commuters and others, engaging them with a brief and invitational encounter with one of the most evocative symbolic gestures of the season. I am grateful to the Rev. Emily Mellott for developing the attached resources and I invite you and your congregations to consider making use of them.

The origins of our liturgical tradition include ritual observances and prayer in the public square. I believe it is appropriate for us to rediscover the potential power of some of these elements for our own time and cultural context. There is a vast hunger in our world for the presence of the Lord Jesus and for a declaration of the truth that we are finite and human creatures, dependent on a loving and merciful God.

The rites of Ash Wednesday can be a powerful tool to offer just this message to folks who would never walk through the doors of our churches to experience it. I hope many of us will be bold in offering this ministry to people outside the walls of our churches. Christ is there.

In the Risen Lord,



Jeffrey D. Lee
Bishop of Chicago