

A Rite for the Burning of Palms in Preparation for Ash Wednesday

While the burning of palms to prepare ashes for Ash Wednesday often takes place on Shrove Tuesday (perhaps in conjunction with a Pancake Supper), in this time of pandemic, congregations are encouraged to hold this rite on the Sunday before Lent, perhaps as a livestreamed event or a pre-recorded act of worship.

The participants move to the place where the ashes will be prepared.

Presider: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

The Presider continues in these or similar words,

Beloved in Christ, in their life these palms drew life from the earth and gave it back to our air and the animals they hosted and sheltered. In the worship of our community, they helped us offer festive joy. Now, as these palms are reduced to ashes for use as we begin our Lenten pilgrimage, we pray they will serve as sign of our mortality and God's power to save. May we recognize God's love at work in us throughout the holy season before us, replanting our lives in the sure and humble soil of God's truth and grace, so we may once again greet the Christian Passover with joy and gladness.

As the fire is kindled, those present may carefully add palms to keep it burning.

A song or hymn may be sung. (Suggestions are provided below).

Then the following prayer is said.

Presider: Merciful God, you called us from the dust of the earth,
and claimed us for Christ in the waters of Baptism.
Look upon us as we prepare for the forty days of Lent
by burning these palms to create the ashes
that will mark us as penitents.
Bless us through our Lenten journey
to the waters of new birth at Easter.
May our fasting be a hunger for justice;
our alms, a way of making peace;
our prayer, the song of humble and thankful hearts.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

People: **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer may be said.

The deacon (or another leader if no deacon is present) dismisses the people.

Deacon: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Suitable hymns for the burning of the palms include:

"Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes"

<https://selahpub.com/CongregationalSong/Hymns/SundaysPalms-SundaysPalms.pdf>

"All Creatures of Our God and King," particularly the verse that sings 'Fire, so intense and fiercely bright,' or 'Thou fire, so masterful and bright.'

#355 in Common Praise (1998)

If "Alleluia" is to be "buried" or put away as part of the rite, the procession moves to the place while the fire is tended and the song or hymn is sung. A banner with "Alleluia" may be folded and tucked it into a chest until its reappearance at Easter. During the procession the following hymn might be sung.

Alleluia, song of sweetness,
voice of joy that cannot die;
"alleluia" is the anthem
ever raised by choirs on high:
in the house of God abiding
thus they sing eternally.

"Alleluia" cannot always
be our song, this we discern;
as our sins, as our transgressions
cause us for new life to yearn;
and the solemn time before us
calls our hearts to God return.

Therefore in our hymns we pray thee,
grant us, blessèd Trinity,
as we to the font now journey
find new Easter hope in thee,
once again our voices singing
"alleluia" joyfully.

Suggested Tunes: *Oriel (#185, Common Praise)*
 Tantum Ergo/St. Thomas (#97, Common Praise)
 Manheim (#564, Common Praise)

This hymn by John Mason Neale (1818-1866) was translated from the Latin "Alleluia dulce carmen" an anonymous 10th or 11th Century work. Public Domain. First published in Mediaeval Hymns, 1851, it has been adapted in later publications. This alt. © D. Jay Koyle, 2021.