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Hope from the Ashes

Insights and Resources for Welcoming Lenten Visitors Paul E. Jarzembowski foreword by Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano

Each year on Ash Wednesday, millions of people —many who are not particularly active in the practice of their faith for one reason or another— return to church to receive ashes, including a significant number of young adults in their twenties and thirties. Even more of them engage in some form of Lenten tradition in their personal lives during the forty days that follow. However, after Easter, studies show that their participation wanes and their connection to church is often lost (at least until Christmas or the next Ash Wednesday).

This momentary experience, though, is an occasion of hope for the Church. As the world moves through uncertain times, this annual phenomenon seems to touch the heart and soul of so many people, as it has for centuries. For ages, the Lenten season has been a source of refuge and stability in the midst of anxiety and crisis.

Through the lens of the Scripture readings heard every Ash Wednesday, this book will help readers understand what they can do in their annual preparation for Lent, as well as what they can do on Ash Wednesday, throughout the Lenten season, and beyond. The goal for the reader is to find practical ways to be responsive and engaging—in their homes, within their local communities, and at their local parish—and be a part of the movement to transform moments of return into milestones along the journey of faith.



Paul Edward Jarzembowski works on the staff of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in Washington, D.C., serving as the Associate Director for the Laity within the USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. He regularly writes, consults, teaches, and speaks on evangelization and ministry for churches and church leaders across North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and the Vatican.



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