

# Ash Wednesday

## *The Lenten Journey Begins*

Last week began the most important period in the Church's calendar, Lent. In the year where our thematic focus is on our value of Compassion, we are called to use the next 40 days on the road to Easter to respond to community needs with compassionate hearts and actions designed to bring hope to others. Having compassion enables us to understand others' pain, address injustices boldly and contribute to the collective healing of our shared humanity. This is the calling for all Christians who believe that the resurrection we celebrate at Easter is a sign for us to bring hope, just as Jesus did.

At All Hallows', we marked the start of Lent, Ash Wednesday, with a liturgy in House Groups. At this assembly, we were reminded that the ashes with which we mark our foreheads are a sign of our humanity and a visible sign of our commitment to the message of Christ. During Lent, we are invited to have a deliberate focus on spiritual growth by stripping away distractions and excess, to redirect our attention from the material world and place it firmly on embracing Gospel values such as love, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and service to others.

This Lent we are focusing on the interlinking stands of Mercy, Compassion and Hope. When we are moved by compassion to reach out to others, to act for justice and mercy, we can be a sign of hope to the world. This year's theme links to the Jubilee Year of Hope we celebrate in the universal Church.

The call to live simply during Lent, traditionally a time of fasting, was reflected in our annual Rice Day fundraiser. By purchasing a container of plain rice and water, our community was not only reminded of the many people who regularly have to eat the most basic of food, but we also raised over \$600 for Project THREADS.

