

Dear parents,

Happy February! With this box, we're covering two important days: Valentines Day (Feb. 14th) and Ash Wednesday (Feb. 17th). The objective of the contents provided here is to help you talk about these days as a family and celebrate them together in your home.

Valentines Day certainly has become commercialized, but it can still serve as a wonderful opportunity to talk with your kids about Jesus' great love and how it is important to share that love with our friends, so they can know Jesus too. The Valentine coloring sheet provides some background on who Saint Valentine was, and why we celebrate this day today. Try asking your children to come up with some ways they can share God's love with others on days besides Valentines Day (bonus points if you actually go out and do some of the things they come up with)!

Ash Wednesday has a little bit of a more somber tone than the love-filled holiday that precedes it. This day marks the start of the season in the church year called "Lent" in which we focus on our sinful nature and our deep need for the forgiveness and salvation won for us on the cross. On Ash Wednesday, many people put ashes or dust on their foreheads as a reminder that when God created mankind, he formed him out of dirty dust, like ash, and someday our bodies will die and we will become "dust" again -- but the ash that we put on our foreheads is in the shape of a *cross* to remind us that the story doesn't end when our bodies die. Because of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb, we get to live again! Death can be a tricky topic to discuss with your children -- but it's an important one. Emphasize that the focus of Lent is sin and death, and that it's okay to be sad about that, but that we always have the joyful hope of Easter morning! It's totally natural for your kids to have questions about death and life after death, so if you need help navigating those difficult conversations please don't hesitate to reach out and we'll get you connected with some age-appropriate resources.

I strongly encourage you to attend Ash Wednesday worship here with us on Feb. 10th at 11am or 7pm. Your family can receive the imposition of ashes in the Sanctuary, or from the comfort and safety of your vehicle via our "drive-in" service option. If you aren't able to come in person, watch the livestream and use the time of the imposition of ashes to discuss what's happening on screen. Read through the materials in this box, and do the Project together as a family (see reverse) to guide your conversations.

As always, I pray that these materials serve you well. I look forward to seeing all of your beautiful Alleluias returned so they can be displayed in the Sanctuary on Easter morning (but keep that part to yourself, so we can surprise the children!)

Your sister in Christ,

VALENTINES/ASH WEDNESDAY CrossBox Content Guide

- **Parent Letter/Content Guide**
 - This is what you're reading right now!
- **ALLELUIA Coloring Sheet**
 - Your main Project for this box! Fill in the stained glass & Alleluia using these colors:
 - **Black**, like ashes, to remind us that we are sinful
 - **Red**, like Jesus' blood, to remind us that He died to forgive our sins
 - **Blue**, like water, to remind us of our baptism
 - **Green**, like a growing plant, to remind us that we have new life in him
 - **Yellow**, like the sun, to remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World
 - **Purple**, like a royal robe, to remind us that Jesus is King
 - On Ash Wednesday, **write your name on the back** and **hide the Alleluia in your empty CrossBox so it can be returned to church**. Read the booklet "All About Ash Wednesday and Lent" to find out why we put away our Alleluias for Lent. Then, on Easter Sunday, come to church or watch worship online for a special surprise!
- **Who Was Saint Valentine? + Valentines to Share**
 - Color the picture & read the story to find out why we celebrate Valentine's Day!
Keep one Valentine treat and give away another to a friend, teacher, or neighbor.
- **All About Ash Wednesday and Lent**
 - A booklet to help you learn about this special time in the Church Year.
- **"Return to the Lord" Lenten Devotions Calendar**
 - Use this calendar from CPH to walk through daily activities and Bible verses in Lent.
- **Memory Verse Challenge Card**
 - Collect a new Verse card in every CrossBox. How is your memory work going on the last two? See if you can memorize this one before your next box arrives!
- **Upcoming Events/Announcements**
 - See what's on the calendar this month for Holy Cross.
- **Comment Card**
 - Your feedback/constructive criticisms/suggestions will help us fine-tune our CrossBox content to make it as effective and exciting as possible for your family!

Need another copy of a specific resource?

Go to hcross.com/crossbox & click on the "Lent/Valentines" section to request it/print one at home!

Watch the LIVE Unboxing Video at 4:30pm on Wednesday* to chat with Dana and get a personal shout-out, answer riddles or play games, and learn more about your box contents!

** Can't catch the live feed? No worries! The videos will be posted afterwards to watch whenever you are able.*



Scan the code to the left, or visit hcross.com/crossbox and click the "Unboxing Videos" links.