

## Ash Wednesday

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [February 17, 2016](#) issue

Here's your Ash Wednesday story.  
A mother carries her tiny daughter  
With her as she gets ashed and the  
Girl, curious and wriggly, squirms  
Into the path of the priest's thumb  
Just as the finger is about to arrive  
On the mother's forehead, and the  
Ashes go right in the kid's left eye.  
She starts to cry, and there's a split  
Second as the priest and the mother  
Gawk, and then they both burst out  
Laughing. The kid is too little to be  
Offended, and the line moves along,  
But this stays with me; not the ashy  
Eye as much as the instant when all  
Could have been pain and awkward  
But instead it led to mutual giggling.  
We are born of dust and star-scatter  
And unto this we shall return, this is  
The Law, but meantime, by God, we  
Can laugh our asses off. What a gift,  
You know? Let us snicker while we  
Can, brothers and sisters. Let us use  
That which makes dark things quail.