

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.