

# ASH WEDNESDAY

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*Remember that you are dust, and to  
dust you shall return.*

17th February 2021

## INTRODUCTION

Ash Wednesday is the day when we gather to begin our 40 day retreat called Lent. Every year we gather at church on this day to remind ourselves that we are not eternal and to repent for our sin, the wages of which is death (Rom. 6:23). Yet, this year many of our local congregations are unable to meet.

Because of this, many of us will find ourselves in our homes unsure how we might mark the beginning of Lent. This liturgy is a response to that.

## PRACTICAL MATTERS

**Ashes:** Due to the inaccessibility of ashes made traditionally from the palm crosses from last year we encourage you to find some dust or soil from your home and mix it with a little olive oil to use as a replacement. Within the service there is a time to prepare your ashes.

**Liturgy:** The service is designed to used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either one can lead with others joining in with the responses in **bold** OR everyone present may join in with all the words.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

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# ASH WEDNESDAY

## GREETING

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

**God's mercy endures for ever and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.**

## COLLECT

Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully.

*A period of silent prayer is kept.*

**Holy God,  
our lives are laid open before you:  
rescue us from the chaos of sin  
and through the death of your Son  
bring us healing and make us whole  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

## THE WORD OF GOD

Hear what God is saying to his people according to the gospel of Matthew.

**6** “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.<sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,<sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in

secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## THE MEANING OF LENT

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ: the early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

By carefully keeping these days, Christians take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.

We invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

## **PREPARATION OF THE ASHES**

Look up to the heavens; when it is clear we see stars, the dust of the universe. Look at the ground; here is the dust of the earth, formed from death and decay but from it comes new life.

*Mix the ashes and olive oil by hand*

Look at your hands, covered in dust. It reminds us of our end and of the sin we carry with us in need of being washed clean.

## **CONFESSON**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
**according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!  
**For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

**Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

**Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

**Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.**

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

**Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.**

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

**O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not  
be pleased with a burnt offering.

**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite  
heart, O God, you will not despise.**

*Psalm 51:7-17*

## IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Dear friends in Christ, I invite you to receive these ashes as a sign  
of the spirit of penitence with which we shall keep this season of Lent.

**God our Father,  
you create us from the dust of the earth:  
grant that these ashes may be for us  
a sign of our penitence  
and a symbol of our mortality;  
for it is by your grace alone  
that we receive eternal life  
in Jesus Christ our Saviour.  
Amen.**

*Mark each other with the ashes you have created. As you do so,  
say the following words.*

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.  
Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

*Or, if participating in this service by yourself.*

I remember that I am dust, and to dust I shall return.  
I turn away from sin and will be faithful to Christ.

## **ABSOLUTION**

**The Lord enrich us with his grace,  
and nourish us with his blessing;  
the Lord defend us in trouble and keep us from all evil;  
the Lord accept our prayers,  
and absolve us from our offences,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.  
Amen.**

## **DISMISSAL**

Christ give us grace to grow in holiness,  
to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among us and remain with us always.

**Amen.**