

2021 Ash Wednesday



The Gathering

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Lord be with you **and also with you.**

Introduction

Brothers and sisters in Christ: since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection. It became the custom of the Church to prepare for this by a season of penitence and fasting.

At first this season of Lent was observed by those who were preparing for Baptism at Easter and by those who were to be restored to the Church's fellowship from which they had been separated through sin. In course of time the Church came to recognize that, by a careful keeping of these days, all Christians might 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.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal, have mercy upon us.

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading Isaiah 58.3-9

Thus says the Lord:

³‘Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?’
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day,
and oppress all your workers.
⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?
⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.
⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm Psalm 51.1-18

1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; ◆
according to the abundance of your compassion blot out my offences.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness ◆ and cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my faults ◆ and my sin is ever before me.
4 Against you only have I sinned ◆ and done what is evil in your sight,
5 So that you are justified in your sentence ◆
and righteous in your judgement.

6 I have been wicked even from my birth, ◆
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

7 Behold, you desire truth deep within me ◆
and shall make me understand wisdom in the depths of my heart.

8 Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; ◆
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, ◆
that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

10 Turn your face from my sins ◆ and blot out all my misdeeds.

11 Make me a clean heart, O God, ◆ and renew a right spirit within me.

12 Cast me not away from your presence ◆
and take not your holy spirit from me.

13 Give me again the joy of your salvation ◆
and sustain me with your gracious spirit;

14 Then shall I teach your ways to the wicked ◆
and sinners shall return to you.

15 Deliver me from my guilt, O God, the God of my salvation, ◆
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.

16 O Lord, open my lips ◆ and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

17 For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it; ◆
you take no delight in burnt offerings.

18 The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; ◆
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Gospel Reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 8.1-11.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all the people, ⁴they said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' ⁶They said this to test Jesus, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' ⁸And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman

standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' ¹¹She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The Liturgy of Penitence

Self-examination and Confession

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father,

have mercy on us.

God the Son,

have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit,

have mercy on us.

Trinity of love, have mercy on us.

Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven. Lord, have mercy.

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

Lord, have mercy.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people.

Lord, have mercy.

Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in daily life and work.

Lord, have mercy.

Our negligence in prayer and worship and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.

Lord, have mercy.

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done, for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

Accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgements, for uncharitable thoughts towards our neighbours and for our prejudice and contempt towards those who differ from us.

Accept our repentance, Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

Accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,

that we may show your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

Silence is kept.

We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.

The Imposition of Ashes

Dear friends in Christ, I invite you to spiritually 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.**

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

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.”

God our Father, the strength of all who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers; and because, in our weakness, we can do nothing good without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life: give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive these his eternal gifts, and also daily endeavour to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Dismissal

This is love, not that we loved God, **but that he loved us and sent his Son.**

He is the sacrifice for our sins, **that we might live through him.**

If God loves us so much **we ought to love one another.**

If we love one another **God lives in us.**

cf 1 John 4.10-12

The Dismissal Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 15:4-7.

Glory to you, O Lord.

`Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Blessing

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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Introduction to the Season

Lent is a forty-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection.

Lent is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days. Lent has been observed in the church since apostolic times.

In many countries, the last day before Lent (called Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras, Carnival, or Fasching) has become a last fling before the solemnity of Lent. In England we keep Pancake Tuesday. For centuries, it was customary to fast by abstaining from meat during Lent.

Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the middle ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross. Liturgical dress is the simplest possible. Churches are kept bare of flowers and decoration. The Gloria in excelsis is not used. The fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare or Refreshment Sunday) was allowed as a day of relief from the rigour of Lent, and the Feast of the Annunciation almost always falls in Lent; these intervals are the background to the modern observance of Mothering Sunday.

As Holy Week approaches, the atmosphere of the season darkens; the readings begin to anticipate the story of Christ's suffering and death, and the reading of the Passion Narrative gave to the Fifth Sunday its name of Passion Sunday. There are many devotional exercises which may be used in Lent and Holy Week outside the set liturgy.