

We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord

Prelude - *Moment of silence*

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 forever.

Song of Meditation

Opening Prayer for Ash Wednesday

Purifying Mystery, your light exposes in us all that we hide.
Awaken us and all your Holy Church to spiritual combat.
Lead us to purity of soul and body in these forty days.

Fortify us to take an honest look at ourselves and to name our secret sins and our ruts of disobedience. Let abstinence from our addictions free us for prayer and the fire of love.

In confidence we commend ourselves and all our passions and cares to your never-failing mercy.

We intercede for the world and the church:
Especially for those we have hurt by our preoccupations ...
For those who live sacrificially so that others
may know your justice and compassion ...

For a just peace in and among nations ...
For professionals who help others stand in the light ...
For the church in every place ...
For the concerns and cares of our lives ...

Holy God, whose Spirit drives us into the wilderness to confront our priorities with a holy fast; grant that as we are about to do battle with our demons and the power of evil, we may be defended by our grace through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Hymn

Scripture lesson.....Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
New Revised Standard Version

*2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—
2 a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!*

*Like blackness spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them
in ages to come.*

*12 Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;*

13 Rend your hearts and not your clothing.

*Return to the Lord, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.*

*14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the Lord, your God?*

*15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly;*

*16 Gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.*

*Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her canopy.*

*17 Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep.*

*Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord,
and do not make your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations.*

*Why should it be said among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"*

Response in song

Please remain seated

**Scripture Lesson.....2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
New Revised Standard Version**

20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 As we work together with him,[a] we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says,

*“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”*

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! 3 We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Response in song Please remain seated

**Scripture Lesson.....Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
New Revised Standard Version**

Concerning Almsgiving

6 “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.[a]

Concerning Prayer

5 “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever 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.[b]

Response in song Please remain seated

Message

**Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline
Thanksgiving over the Ashes
Imposition of Ashes**

Offertory/Doxology/Prayer

Holy God, as we start the journey of Lent give us a will of repentance, a mind of sacrificial love, and a heart of gratitude. Indeed, you are “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love...” We offer our gifts and our whole selves, asking that you might strengthen us for the journey, in the name of Christ, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Song of Sending

***Dismissal with Blessing**

May God, who has forgiven and fed us, now make us strong for these days ahead. May Jesus lead us, and we be found faithful to follow. May the Spirit drive us into the wilderness, burning away the chaff of our lives, and purifying our hearts for all to see and be blessed. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Mercy, Master, and Fire, be with us and remain with us Always! Amen.

Please depart in reflection

What is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Lenten season, a period of 40-some days focused on spiritual purification and repentance. It is a day of fasting for Catholic and Anglican churches. Ash Wednesday gets its name from the practice of the distribution of ashes upon the foreheads of Christians.

What do the black marks mean?

Those black marks are meant to be crosses, although as the day wears on they can look like black smudges. They are a mixture of ashes, Holy Water and, sometimes, olive oil. It's especially significant, because Jesus was greeted in Jerusalem as a hero and the Messiah by the mob and he would eventually be put to death by the hands of the Romans at the insistence of those people. The ashes are meant to remind Christians about human mortality, while also showing the individual's desire for repentance and mourning of their own sins. As the priest or minister puts the ash on the body, he, or she, says "Remember that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return" (Genesis 3:19) or "Repent, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).