

ASH WEDNESDAY

The Ministers may enter in silence, or a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung. The People stand, and the Officiant says

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

People **His mercy endures for ever.**

The Officiant invites the People to the observance of a holy Lent, either here or following the sermon, saying

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful, were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. In this manner, the whole Congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need that all Christians continually have to renew our repentance and faith.

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 alms-giving; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.

And to make a right beginning, let us now pray for grace, that we may faithfully keep this Lent.

The Officiant and people kneel. A period of silent prayer follows.

The Officiant then says

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

THE LESSONS

The following Lessons are read. The Psalm may be said or sung.

JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17 OR ISAIAH 58:1-12

PSALM 103 OR 103:8-14

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20—6:10

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

If Communion is to follow, all stand for the Gospel, and the Deacon or Priest reads it, first saying

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

THE SERMON

PENITENTIAL PSALM AND IMPOSITION OF ASHES

The Officiant says

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

If ashes are to be imposed, the Officiant says

Almighty God, you have created us from the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes may be for us a symbol of our mortality and a sign of our penitence, that we may remember that it is by your grace alone that we receive the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Then ashes are imposed with the following words

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

PSALM 51

All kneel. Psalm 51:1-17 is sung or said.

- 1 **Have mercy upon me, O God, in your great goodness; ***
according to the multitude of your mercies wipe away 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 this evil in your sight, ***
so that you are justified in your sentence, and blameless in your judgment.
- 5 **Behold, I was brought forth in wickedness, ***
and in sin my mother conceived me.
- 6 **But behold, you desire truth in the inward parts ***
and shall make me understand wisdom secretly.
- 7 **You shall purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; ***
you shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 **You shall make me hear of joy and gladness, ***
that the bones which you have broken may rejoice.
- 9 **Turn your face from my sins, ***
and blot out all my misdeeds.
- 10 **Create in me a clean heart, O God, ***
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 11 **Cast me not away from your presence, ***
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
- 12 **O give me the comfort of your help again, ***
and sustain me with your willing Spirit.
- 13 **Then shall I teach your ways unto the wicked, ***
and sinners shall return unto you.
- 14 **Deliver me from blood-guilt, O God, the God of my salvation, ***
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.
- 15 **O Lord, open my lips, ***
and my mouth shall show forth your praise.
- 16 **For you desire no sacrifice, or else I would give it to you; ***
but you delight not in burnt-offerings.
- 17 **The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; ***
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you shall not despise.

CONFESSION AND LITANY OF PENITENCE

The Deacon or other person appointed says

Let us humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

Silence may follow. The Officiant and People together, all kneeling, pray

**Most holy and merciful Father,
we confess to you, and to one another,**

**and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
that we have sinned, through our own fault
in thought, word, and deed;
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.
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.**

Reader Lord, have mercy upon us:
People **For we have sinned against you.**

The Reader alone continues, and the People respond

For all our unfaithfulness and disobedience; for the pride, vanity, and hypocrisy of our lives;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our self-pity and impatience, and our envy of those we think more fortunate than ourselves;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our unrighteous anger, bitterness, and resentment; for all lies, gossip, and slander against our neighbors;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our sexual impurity, our exploitation of other people, and our failure to give of ourselves in love;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our intemperate pursuit of worldly goods and comforts;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our dishonesty in daily life and work, our ingratitude for your gifts, and our failure to heed your call.
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our wastefulness and misuse of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For all false judgments, for prejudice and contempt of others, and for all uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our negligence in prayer and worship; for our presumption and abuse of your means of grace;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For seeking the praise of others rather than the approval of God;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

For our failure to commend the faith that is in us;
Lord, have mercy upon us:

People **For we have sinned against you.**

All then pray

Show favor to your people, O Lord, who turn to you in weeping, fasting, and prayer. For you are a merciful God, full of compassion, long-suffering, and abounding in steadfast love. You spare when we deserve punishment, and in your wrath you remember mercy. Spare your people, good Lord, spare us; in the multitude of your mercies, look upon us and forgive us; through the merits and mediation of your blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE ABSOLUTION

Grant to your faithful people, merciful Lord, pardon and peace; that we may be cleansed from all our sins, and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE COMFORTABLE WORDS

The Officiant may then say one or more of the following sentences, first saying

Hear the Word of God to all who truly turn to him.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW 11:28

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16^T

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

1 TIMOTHY 1:15

If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 JOHN 2:1-2^T

THE PEACE

Officiant The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And with your spirit.**

The Service Continues with the Liturgy for Holy Communion at the Offertory