

Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

Before we begin let us take a few moments of silence.

Presider: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Presider: And so we pray:

Dear God, watch over us with tender love, as today we celebrate Ash Wednesday and the beginning of this Lenten season. We sign with a cross –ashes on our foreheads to remind us that there is a part of ourselves that is of this earth and that one day will return to dust. But more important, the cross and the ashes are placed on a vessel that houses the Holy Spirit- that in this broken vessel is the very presence of God made visible in our acts of love and in the tremendous creativity within the human spirit. Help us during these 40 days to ponder a better balance of these two natures within ourselves. As Christ died and rose from the dead—so too will we rise one day to be with God and all those gone before us. Bless us as we begin our Lenten journey—through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Reader One:

A reading from the Second letter of Paul to the Corinthians...

We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. As we work together with Christ, we urge you not to accept the grace of God in vain. 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!

The word of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Psalm Response: **Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth.**

Your ways, O Lord, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth.

Remember that your compassion, O Lord,
and your kindness are from of old.
In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O Lord.

R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth.

Good and upright is the Lord;
thus he shows us the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
he teaches the humble his way.

R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth.

Gospel

Presider: Please stand for the gospel.
The Lord Be With You.

ALL: And with your spirit.

Presider: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

ALL: Glory to you O Lord.

Reader:

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. "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.

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. "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. 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. And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

(At this time Ashes are administered)

“Remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return.”

Presider: Let us now bring our thoughts and petitions to God with love and compassion.

Reader: Our response is: **God of love, hear our prayer.**

1. For you and I as the people of God, that in our frailty as human being, we may find mercy and love for ourselves and for the frailty in others, we pray to the Lord. R
2. For our families, that Lent may be a time of prayerful consideration of the blessings in our lives, but also the reliance we can have on things especially when they keep us from people and relationships, we pray to the Lord. R
3. For the children in our schools—that in their youth they too, may consider the brevity of this life and the importance of using all their gives in service to others, we pray to the Lord. R
4. For all those in our lives who may be ill at this time, that through our compassion and love, God may bless and guide them back to health. R
5. We pray for the governments of this world, that leaders do all they can to bring peace and justice and the basic necessities of life to their people, we pray to the Lord. R

Presider: And now together let us say that great prayer our loving God has given us.

Our Father who art in heaven....

Presider: Almighty God, help us to follow your example in our lives, that we may use our many gifts in service to you and each other. Help us to use these 40 days wisely- to ponder the gift of our lives and the preciousness of each day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN

The Lord be with you.

ALL: And with your spirit.

Presider: Let us now go forth to love and serve the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Presider: Let us now conclude by offering each other a sign of peace.