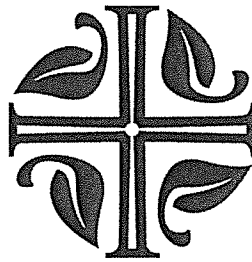




Ash Wednesday



The Lenten journey from the ashes of death to resurrected life begins on the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, which signifies a time to turn around, changing directions and repenting. It begins with a public act of confession and contrition. We acknowledge that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, standing in solidarity with our fellow creatures before our Creator, acutely aware of our mortality. This first day of Lent reminds us that unless we are willing to die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality, individually and corporately. We symbolize this with the imposition of ashes (made from last year's palms) — placing a cross on one's forehead. During the imposition of ashes, the words: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19) are repeated again and again. We are to remember that we are but temporary creatures, always on the edge of death.

On Ash Wednesday, we begin our Lenten journey through the wilderness toward Easter. Ashes on the forehead is a sign of our humanity and a reminder of our mortality. Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one's faith. The ashes are a reminder to us and our communities of our finite creatureliness. The ashes we wear on our Lenten journey symbolize the dust and broken debris of our lives as well as the reality that eventually each of us will die. We follow Jesus into the wilderness, resisting temptation, fasting, and moving toward Jerusalem and the cross. Our Lenten journey is one of metanoia ("turning around"), of changing directions from self-serving toward the self-giving way of the cross and finally resurrection.

THE LITURGY FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

APOSTOLIC GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

WORD

FIRST READING: *Joel 2:1-2, 12-17*

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 —

²a 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.

¹²Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³rend 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.

¹⁴Who 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?

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion;

sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
¹⁶gather 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.
¹⁷Between 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?'"

A The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Please be seated.

The Message— The Rev. John T. Collins

Sermon Notes:

INVITATION TO LENT

Silence is then kept for a time, all kneeling.

If ashes are to be imposed, the Celebrant says the following prayer.

P Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

C Amen.

The celebrant invites the congregation to receive the ashes. The ashes are imposed with the following words:

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

P Beloved People of God,

From the early days of our faith,
Christians have observed the remembrance of Christ's passion and resurrection with great reverence. It became the custom to prepare for that observance by a season of prayer and fasting, and the reconciliation of those who had been separated from the community of faith.

By keeping the season of Lent, we take to heart God's call to repentance,

And the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel
And practice in our daily lives the work of reconciliation.
I invite you to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

Let us begin this season by receiving the reminder of our mortal nature with prayer and gratitude for God's redeeming work.

Please kneel if you are able.

LITANY OF PENITENCE

The Celebrant and People together, all kneeling.

C **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 by our own fault
in thought, word, and deed;
by what we have done, and by what we have left
undone.**

The Celebrant continues.

P 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.

C **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

P 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.

C **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

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

C **We confess to you, Lord.**

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

C **We confess to you, Lord.**

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

C **We confess to you, Lord.**

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

C **We confess to you, Lord.**

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

C **We confess to you, Lord.**

P 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,

C **Accept our repentance, Lord.**

P For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

C **Accept our repentance, Lord.**

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

C **Accept our repentance, Lord.**

P Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;

C **Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

P Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,

C **That we may show forth your glory in the world.**

P By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

C **Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

BENEDICTION

P Almighty God, Father,
+ Son and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.

C **Amen.**



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