

ASH WEDNESDAY

Liturgy of the Word with Distribution of Ashes for Celebration at Home

In preparation for this celebration, cover a small table with a white cloth and place a crucifix and a lit candle on the table. Prepare a container with ash which you may have received from your parish or which you can make by burning a blessed palm. The ash should be mixed with a drop of water.

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All respond: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray.

Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting
this campaign of Christian service,
so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils,
we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All respond: Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First reading

Joel 2:12-18

A reading from the prophet Joel

'Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.' Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent. Who knows if he will not turn again, will not relent, will not leave a blessing as he passes, oblation and libation for the Lord your God? Sound the trumpet in Zion! Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, call the people together, summon the community, assemble the elders, gather the children, even the infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom and the bride her alcove. Between vestibule and altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, lament. Let them say, 'Spare your people, Lord! Do not make your heritage a thing of shame, a byword for the nations. Why should it be said among the nations, "Where is their God?"' Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land, took pity on his people.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 50(51):3-6,12-14,17

R. Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin. **R.**

My offences truly I know them;
my sin is always before me
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done. **R.**

A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **R.**

Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise. **R.**

Second reading

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

We are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God. As his fellow workers, we beg you once again not to neglect the grace of God that you have received. For he says: At the favourable time, I have listened to you; on the day of salvation I came to your help. Well, now is the favourable time; this is the day of salvation.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

cf. Ps 94:8

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

Harden not your hearts today,
but listen to the voice of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6,16-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

The Gospel of the Lord

A period of silence may follow the Liturgy of the Word.

Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

Leader:

Let us humbly ask God our Father
that he be pleased to bless with the abundance of his grace
these ashes, which we will put on our heads in penitence.

Pray briefly in silence.

O God, who are moved by acts of humility
and respond with your forgiveness to works of penance,
lend your merciful ear to our prayers
and in your kindness pour out the grace of your blessing
on your servants who are marked with these ashes,
that, as we follow the Lenten observances,
we may be worthy to come with minds made pure
to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of your Son.
Through Christ our Lord.

All respond: Amen.

The leader makes a cross with the ashes on the forehead of those present, and says to each one:
Repent, and believe in the Gospel.

When this is done, one of those present makes a cross with the ashes on the forehead of the leader, speaking the same words.

Universal Prayer

Leader:

We should pour forth prayers at all times, but, above all, in these days of Lent
we ought to watch more intently with Christ and direct our petitions more fervently to God.

Reader (or Leader):

That in this sacred time
the whole Christian people may be more abundantly nourished
by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

That peoples in need may find help
and that peace and security may be firmly established everywhere.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

That the world's nations may be delivered from the health pandemic
and that our sacrifices at this time
may build solidarity with our fellow human beings.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

That all who are afflicted or suffering temptation
may be strengthened by his grace.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

That all of us may learn to distribute the fruits of self-denial
for the good of those in need.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

That those who have died, through the mercy of God,
may share in the Resurrection to eternal life.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Leader:

We present all our prayers to the Father using the words our Saviour taught us:

All:

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. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Leader: Let us pray.

May the grace we have received sustain us, O Lord,
that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you
and be for us a healing remedy.
Through Christ our Lord.

All respond: Amen.

The leader concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the Sign of the Cross while saying the following:

May almighty God bless us, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All respond: Amen.

Ashes which are left over should be disposed of in the earth outdoors.

Acknowledgments

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