

ASH WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Come, let us worship the Lord!

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, *in which we take time to connect to God in different ways. The imposition of ashes on our forehead is an opportunity for you to reflect on your mortality. What seems like an ending is really an invitation to make each day a new beginning, in which we are washed in God's mercy and forgiveness. With the cross on our brow, we long for the spiritual renewal that flows from the springtime Easter feast to come.*

The Congregation's Part is in **bold**.

GATHERING

The assembly gathers in silence.

PSALM 51

**Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.**

**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.**

**For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.**

**Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.**

**Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.**

**You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

**Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

**Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**

**Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.**

**Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.**

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

REETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

THE 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--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. Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 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. 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?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; 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. 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?'"

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

THE SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made himself to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we urge you also 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! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see-- we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said, "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.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

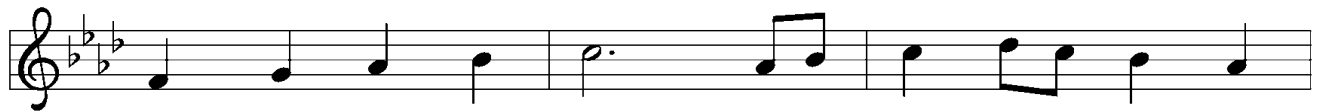
Pastor Peggy Rose

HYMN OF THE DAY

O Lord Throughout These 40 Days



1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you
2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your
3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and
4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and



prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance
faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your
fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -
all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal



for our sin, and free us from our past.
skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.
ny our - selves that we may know God's love.
Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

Text: based on Claudia F. Hernaman, 1838–1898; para. Gilbert E. Doan Jr., b. 1930

Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davison, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816

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INVITATION TO LENT

Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most holy and merciful God,

**we confess to you and to one another,
and before the whole company of heaven,
that we have sinned by our fault,
by our own fault,
by our own most grievous 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. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

We have shut our ears 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. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.
Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

You may mark yourself with ashes, or simply make the sign of the cross on your forehead if you prefer, with the following words.

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

HYMN FOR IMPOSITION OF ASHES

HOW DEEP THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR US

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory

Behold the Man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

I will not boast in anything
No gifts no power no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom

RESPONSE

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,
that we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Returning to the Lord, our God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of God's creation.

A brief silence.

Gracious and merciful God, empower your church to be an ambassador of reconciliation in the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious and merciful God, restore creation to wholeness and strengthen our resolve to be good stewards of all that you have made. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious and merciful God, make this the acceptable time for peace. Guide the leaders of all nations to put an end to war and violence. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious and merciful God, deliver those in need: the hungry, the afflicted, the imprisoned, and the ill (*especially*), that their joy be restored. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious and merciful God, create a clean heart in all who worship here today and bless all who prepare during these forty days to be baptized at Easter. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen.

SENDING SONG

THE WONDERFUL CROSS

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride

See from His head, His hands, His feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown

*Oh the wonderful cross, Oh the wonderful cross
Bids me come and die and find that I may truly live
Oh the wonderful cross, Oh the wonderful cross
All who gather here by grace, draw near and bless Your name*

Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small
Love so amazing so divine
Demands my soul my life my all

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DISMISSAL

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.**