

Communion at Home: Ash Wednesday



Welcome to our service for Ash Wednesday as we begin the season of Lent.

Today is a solemn day in the Church's year, second only to that of Good Friday, and marks the beginning of a time for penitence and reflection upon our wrongdoing.

'Ash Wednesday' takes its name in part from the sign of the Cross being made on the foreheads of worshippers in ash, created from the palm crosses of the previous year. Repentance with ash finds its root in ancient custom but the most notable biblical example is that of Job, who declared that he would 'repent in dust and ashes' as a symbol of his penitence. (Job 42.6) Dust and ashes are also a symbol of our mortality, a reminder that life can be fleeting and that eternal life with God should be our ultimate goal.

Our service today is particularly geared towards penitence and acknowledging our wrongdoing before God. However, God's promise to us is one of forgiveness of sins to those who truly seek it, and this too is picked up in our liturgy.

*During the service, please join with texts printed in **bold** type.*

Introduction

Brothers and sisters in Christ, since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection and prepared for this by a season of penitence and fasting. By carefully keeping these days, Christians take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord. 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 self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Psalm 51

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John. (8.1-11)

Glory to you, O Lord.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

The Liturgy of Penitence

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

From all evil and mischief;
from pride, vanity, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice; and from all evil intent,
good Lord, deliver us.

From sloth, worldliness and love of money; from hardness of heart
and contempt for your word and your laws,
good Lord, deliver us.

From sins of body and mind; from the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil,
good Lord, deliver us.

In all times of sorrow; in all times of joy; in the hour of death, and at the day of judgement,
good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of your holy incarnation; by your birth, childhood and obedience;
by your baptism, fasting and temptation,
good Lord, deliver us.

By your ministry in word and work; by your mighty acts of power; and by your preaching of
the kingdom,
good Lord, deliver us.

By your agony and trial; by your cross and passion; and by your precious death and burial,
good Lord, deliver us.

By your mighty resurrection; by your glorious ascension; and by your sending of the Holy Spirit,
good Lord, deliver us.

Give us true repentance; forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance and our deliberate sins; and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit to amend our lives according to your holy word.

***Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.***

Silence is kept.

Make our hearts clean, O God;
and renew a right spirit within us.

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought, in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love, and marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light.
Amen.**

The Imposition of Ashes

All are invited to make the sign of the cross

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.
Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

At the end of the imposition,

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with his blessing;
the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;
the Lord accept your prayers,
and absolve you from your offences,
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.
Amen.

A memorial meal

Lord's Prayer

Lord Jesus, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray;

**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, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Blessing

May God the Father,
who does not despise the broken spirit,
give to you a contrite heart.

Amen.

May Christ,
who bore our sins in his body on the tree,
heal you by his wounds.

Amen.

May the Holy Spirit,
who leads us into all truth,
speak to you words of pardon and peace.

Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.