

PSP arish Support Pack

ASH WEDNESDAY

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INTRODUCTION

Articles for use in Parish Magazine or in Order of Service

1

Lent probably originated with the pre-Easter baptismal rituals of catechumens, although the number of days set aside for fasting varied according to region. Irenaeus (AD 180) testifies to the variety of durations of pre-Easter fasts in the second century. Tertullian (AD 200) suggests that Catholics fasted two days prior to Easter, but that the Montanists (a heretical sect that Tertullian later joined) fasted longer.

However, the number forty, hallowed by the fasts of Moses, Elijah, and especially Jesus, probably influenced the later fixed time of 40 days. The Canons of Nicaea (AD 325) were the first to mention 40 days of fasting. Initially the forty day Lenten fast began on a Monday, and was intended only for those who were preparing to enter the Church at Easter. Lent still begins on a Monday in many Eastern Churches.

Eventually the West began Lent on Ash Wednesday. In the Western Christian calendar, Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and occurs forty-six days (forty days not counting Sundays) before Easter. It is a moveable feast, falling on a different date each year because it is dependent on the date of Easter. It can occur as early as 4 February or as late as 10 March.

Ash Wednesday gets its name from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful as a sign of repentance. The ashes used are gathered after the Palm Crosses from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burned. In the liturgical practice of some churches, the ashes are mixed with the Oil of the Catechumens (one of the sacred oils used to anoint those about to be baptized), though some churches use ordinary oil. This paste is used by the minister who presides at the service to make the sign of the cross, first upon his or her own forehead and then on those of congregants. The minister recites the words: "Remember (O man) that you are dust, and to dust you shall return", or "Repent, and believe the Gospel."

The East has no equivalent to Ash Wednesday.

2

The Hebrew People of the Old Testament understood that human life was short, and that all persons eventually would become sick, grow old and die. They knew their lives were like the grass that grew in the fields and then faded away. They remembered that they were children of Adam and Eve. God made Adam and Eve from the dust of the earth and breathed His own life into them, and cared for them like a good Father, holding them in the palm of His hand. When they lived by God's laws, they knew they would always be happy. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their life wasn't easy. They had to work hard, and eventually they died.

When the Hebrews disobeyed God, persons called *prophets* called them to repent, to turn away from their sin, and to have a *change of heart*. The people would put on clothes made from rough cloth, cover their heads with ashes; they would *fast* and pray for God's mercy.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday begins our forty day season of Lent that leads to Easter. On Ash Wednesday, we come together like the people of the Old Testament to remind ourselves

that we don't always follow God's ways and need to ask God for His mercy and forgiveness. Like God's people in the time of the prophets, we wear ashes to show that we want to turn away from whatever keeps us from God, and to have a *change of heart*, so that we can live in right relationship with God and each other.

ASH WEDNESDAY READINGS

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalm 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

ASH WEDNESDAY LITURGY

INTRODUCTION

Christians gather on this day to mark the beginning of Lent's baptismal preparation for Easter. On this day, the people of God hear the solemn proclamation to keep a fast in preparation for Easter's feast, and contemplate anew the ongoing meaning of baptismal initiation into the Lord's death and resurrection. The church hears God's promise of forgiveness and tastes God's mercy in the bread of life and the cup of salvation. From this solemn liturgy, the church goes forth on its journey to the great baptismal feast of Easter.

EXHORTATION

Brothers and sisters: God created us to experience joy in communion with him, to love all humanity, and to live in harmony with all of his creation. But sin separates us from God, our neighbours, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us. Also, by our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his judgment, but to turn to him and live. As disciples of the Lord Jesus we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbour. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love--the discipline of Lent--help us to wage our spiritual warfare. I invite you, therefore, to commit yourselves to this struggle and confess your sins, asking our Father for strength to persevere in your Lenten discipline.

Let us confess our sins to Almighty God

Kneel or sit. Silence for reflection and self-examination precedes the confession.

CONFESSION

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.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

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.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness. The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

we confess to you, Lord.

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

we confess to you, Lord.

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

we confess to you, Lord.

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

we confess to you, Lord.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,
we confess to you, Lord.

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,
accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbours, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,
accept our repentance, Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,
accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.
Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great. Amen

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 Lord,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore we implore him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, and that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and neighbours. Call forth our prayers and acts of tenderness and strengthen us to face our mortality, that we may reach with confidence for your mercy; in Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Ministry of The Word

First Reading Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; or Isaiah 58:1-12

Second Reading 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Gospel Reading Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Invitation to the Observance of the Lenten Discipline

Friends in Christ, every year at the time of Easter we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy

Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God. Let us come before God, our Creator and Redeemer, and confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

Litany of Penitence

Let us pray. Holy and merciful God, 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.

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 not listened 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. We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness: The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives, we confess to you, O God. Our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation of other people,

we confess to you, O God.

Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,
we confess to you, O God.

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

we confess to you, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,
we confess to you, O God.

Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
we confess to you, O God.

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

we confess to you, O God.

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

we confess to you, O God.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

Favourably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great. Amen.

The Eucharist and Invitation to the Lord's Table

Standing at the table, the presiding minister invites the people to the Lord's Supper, saying:

Hear the gracious words of our Saviour Jesus Christ: Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. No one who comes to me will I cast out. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Great Thanksgiving

All stand.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, eternal God, creator and ruler of the universe. You are our God, and we are the creatures of your hand. You made us from the dust of the earth, breathed into us the breath of life, and set us in your world to love and serve you. When we rejected your love and ignored your wisdom, you did not reject us. You loved us still and called us to turn again to you in obedience and in love. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with the heavenly choirs and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Let us pray

You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Out of your great love for the world, you sent Jesus among us to set us free from the tyranny of evil. He lived as one of us, sharing our joys and sorrows. By his dying and rising, he releases us from bondage to sin and frees us from the dominion of death. We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

Remembering all your mighty and merciful acts, we take this bread and this wine from the gifts you have given us, and celebrate with joy the redemption won for us in Jesus Christ. Accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as a living and holy offering of ourselves, that our lives may proclaim the One crucified and risen. Great is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.**

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

By your Spirit unite us with the living Christ and with all who are baptized in his name, that we may be one in ministry in everyplace. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world. Lead us, O God, by the power of your Spirit to live as the Lord requires: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with you, our God.

Keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ until this mortal life is ended, and all that is earthly returns to dust.

Give us strength to serve you faithfully until the promised day of resurrection, when, with the redeemed of all the ages, we will feast with you at your table in glory. Through Christ, all glory and honour are yours, almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit in the holy church, now and forever. **Amen.**

And now, with the confidence of the children of God, let us 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

Holding out both the bread and the cup to the people, the minister says:
Holy things for holy people.

Post-communion Prayer

God of compassion, through your Son Jesus Christ you reconciled your people to yourself. Following his example of prayer and fasting, may we obey you with willing hearts and serve one another in holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing and Charge

The minister gives God's blessing to the congregation, saying: May the God of peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being spirit, soul, and body free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

All quietly depart

PENITENTIAL SERVICE WITH HOLY COMMUNION

Hymn

Introductory Scriptures

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. God is near to the brokenhearted and saves those whose spirit is crushed. (Ps 34:14-15)

Console my people, says your God, console them and speak to their hearts. (Is 40:1-2)

I

s this not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and to bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of God shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and God will answer; you shall cry for help, and God will say, "Here I am." (Is 58:6-9a)

Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. You have set me free from my distress. (Ps 4:1)

"Yet even now," says the Sovereign, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments."

Return to the Sovereign, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil. (Joel 2:12-13)

Hymn

Psalm Reading and Choir response

Psalm 51:1-12

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

Choir response

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

Choir response

Against you, you only, have I sinned,
and done that which is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless in your judgement.

Choir response

I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my parents conceive me.
You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Choir response

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be cleaner than snow.
Fill me with joy and gladness;
let the bones which you have broken rejoice.

Choir response

Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

Choir response

Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Choir response

Hymn

Confession

Let us join in confessing our sins.
As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbour. Repentance, fasting, prayer, study, and works of love help us to return to that love. I invite you to commit yourselves to love God and neighbour by confessing your sins and by asking God for strength to persevere in your Lenten discipline.

Most holy and merciful God, we confess to you, to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth. We have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed—by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with all our heart, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us

We have ignored your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us

We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness. We confess our pride, hypocrisy, and impatience. We possess self-indulgent appetites and exploit others. We envy those more fortunate than ourselves. We love worldly goods and comforts. We are dishonest in our daily life and work, negligent in prayer and worship, and fail to draw on the gift of faith you have given us.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us

Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering, for our indifference to injustice and cruelty, for all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbours, for prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, for waste and pollution of your creation, and for our lack of concern for those who come after us.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us

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

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us One:

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation.

That we may show forth your glory,

By the cross and passion of our Saviour,

Bring us with all your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.

A__men, A-men, A__men, A-men, A__men, A_____men.

A Reading from the Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 58:1–12

A Psalm of Repentance

A Reading from the Epistles

2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

Hymn

A Reading from the Gospel

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

Meditation

Silence

Prayer of Our Saviour

Held in the arms of God our Mother, we pray the prayer that Jesus taught to those he called sister, brother, and friend.....

Holy Communion

Blessing

We go forth, O Holy One, on a quest to find you again in the hidden places of our lives.

We go forth with our senses heightened to recognise the needs of the world around us.

We leave refreshed with our hearts lifted up to you,

With our minds open to your leading,

With our gifts to share with others,

And always with your word of peace on our lips.

Let the people of God say, "Amen."

Amen.

Hymn

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 51

The Response to the psalm is “Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.”

ALL: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Be merciful to me, O God, Because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy, wipe away my sins! Wash away all my evil, And make me clean from my sin.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

I recognise my faults; I am always conscious of my sins. I have sinned against you –only against you- And have done what is wrong in your sight.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

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.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Give me again the joy of your salvation, And make me willing to obey you. O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth will declare your praise.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

PRAYERS

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbours. 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 Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

God our Father, as we begin this holy season of Lent, help us to see that your merciful love is with us always, even when we wander far from you. We ask you to change our hearts, that we might become better followers of your Son Jesus. With the help of your grace, may our prayers and sacrifices over the next forty days lead us to welcome Him in each other, in the poor, sick and lonely so that together, we can greet Him as one family at Easter. We make this prayer to you in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Lord, protect us in our struggle against evil. As we begin the discipline of Lent, make this season holy by our self-denial. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Father in heaven, the light of your truth bestows sight to the darkness of sinful eyes. May this season of repentance bring us the blessing of your forgiveness and the gift of our light. Grant this through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

International Committee on English in the Liturgy

Father of light,
in You is found no shadow of change
but only the fullness of life and limitless truth.
Open our hearts to the voice of Your Word
and free us from the original darkness
that shadows our vision.
Restore our sight that we may look upon Your Son
who calls us to repentance and a change of heart,
for he lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

International Committee on English in the Liturgy

Father,
You have taught us to overcome our sins
by prayer, fasting, and works of mercy.
When we are discouraged by our weakness,
give us confidence in Your love.
We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son,
Who lives and reigns with Your and the Holy Spirit
One God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*
International Committee on English in the Liturgy

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbours. 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 Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Ashes Blessing Prayer:

Lord our God,
We ask you to bless these ashes,
Symbol of our desire
To turn away from sin,
And to follow Jesus your Son
May your Holy Spirit give us the strength
To pray, do good works and make sacrifices
This holy season of Lent,

As we joyfully wait to meet Jesus,
Risen from the dead,
At Easter.
We make this prayer to you in the name of Jesus, our Lord. *Amen.*

Final Prayer

God our Father,
You formed us from the dust of the earth,
And brought us to new life in Christ
Through the waters of Baptism.
We ask you to change our hearts
As we journey through these forty days of Lent.
Help us to see Jesus in everyone we meet,
And to serve him in all persons,
Especially the poor, the sick and the lonely.
By your grace, may our prayers and sacrifices this Lent
Help us grow closer to each another and to you,
As one family in Jesus.
We make this prayer to you in His name. *Amen.*

To keep Lent faithfully

Let us pray
for the grace to keep Lent faithfully.

Lord,
protect us in the struggle against evil.
As we begin the discipline of Lent,
make this season holy by our self-denial.

Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Let us pray
in quiet remembrance of our need for redemption.
Father in heaven,
the light of your truth bestows sight
to the darkness of sinful eyes.
May this season of repentance
bring us the blessing of your forgiveness
and the gift of your light.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Lord,
may everything we do
begin with your inspiration,
continue with your help,
and reach perfection under your guidance.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, you Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Lord,
with your loving care
guide the penance we have begun.
Help us to persevere with love and sincerity.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

God, we bring our failures in caring, helping, and loving,
we bring the pain we have caused other,
we bring the injustice in society of which we are a part,
to the transforming power of your grace.
Grant us the courage to accept the healing you offer
and to turn again toward the sunrise of your reign,
that we may walk with you in the promise of peace
you have willed for all the children of the earth,
and have made known to us in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Intercessory

Gracious and merciful God,
you see into the secret places of our hearts,
where we mourn our sins.
As we turn again to your grace, receive our prayers.

Prayers of the People, concluding with:

Look with mercy on our contrite hearts,
wash from us the stain of iniquity,

and create a new and right spirit in us,
that we may declare your praise
and offer an acceptable sacrifice in these Lenten days;
through Christ Jesus, who bore our sins on the cross. Amen.

Scripture

O God, you delight not in pomp and show,
but in a humble and contrite heart.
Overturn our love of worldly possessions
and fix our hearts more firmly on you,
that, having nothing,
we may yet possess everything,

ASH WEDNESDAY INTERCESSORY

On this solemn day the words of Jesus invite us to offer our prayers with integrity and humility. We pray, "Trusting in your mercy," and respond, "Amen."

Let us pray for Christians throughout the world.

God of All Compassion, you wait for your people to return to you. Guide your church through the days of Lent, that we might look honestly at our lives, seek reconciliation with our neighbours, and turn again to you. We pray, trusting in your mercy, **Amen.**

Let us pray for nations in conflict.

God of Reconciliation, transform the desires of those who fuel conflict. May they seek human dignity, not domination; the welfare of their people before territory, and the kingdom of which you are the ruler. We pray, trusting in your mercy, **Amen.**

Let us pray for those who will not repent or do not know their need for forgiveness.

God of All Consolation, we seek cures for the sicknesses of heart and soul that only you can heal. Change the minds of all who believe they can live without your forgiveness and welcome them with your mercy. We pray, trusting in that mercy. **Amen.**

Let us pray for this parish in all that keeps us from realizing God's reign.

God of All Truthfulness, you call us to join your reign. Make us people who readily see you in the face of the stranger, people who seek and offer forgiveness, people who love your kingdom. We pray trusting in your mercy. **Amen.**

Loving God, we give you thanks that you hear our prayers and mercifully welcome all who seek you in faith. We commend to your care all for whom we pray. **Amen.**

SERMONS FOR ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT

A C of I rector in Rural Leinster

Our own Ian Poulton's blog carries last year's Ash Wednesday sermon. The lessons from ski school are applied without any reference to the slippery slope". Discipline links the skiing and Lent.

<http://www.forthefainthearted.com/2010/02/15/sermon-for-ash-wednesday-2010/>

Notes from a small curate

The title is that of the web site - references to the vertically or horizontally challenged are not permitted! Good use of TS Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" ...*Because I do not hope to turn again*

Because I do not hope ... is set against Paul's plea to *Be reconciled to God*. The preacher's context is a parish in Liverpool.

http://www.johndavies.org/sermons/htw_03_03_05.html

Dust and ashes

Ash Wednesday/Lent sermon from a C of E vicar. Begins with TS Elliott's Four Quartets, quotes George Herbert, "Welcome dear feast of Lent: Who loves not thee, he loves not temperance or authority", and tells what the season is about economically and accurately.

<http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/lentsermon.htm>

For Where Your Treasure is, there will your heart be also

On a pilgrimage the whole of geography takes on symbolic meaning. The geography begins in the desert. In the crucible of heat and sand, Jesus was trying to figure out, as Frederick Buechner writes, "what it meant to be Jesus." In the weeks that follow Ash Wednesday, the Gospel readings will recount what Jesus did afterwards. Interesting link between ash at the beginning of Lent and Easter fire at the end.

By Norah Gallagher

<http://www.noragallagher.org/PDF/AshWednesday.pdf>

Three aspects of Lent fasting

Sermon preached in the context of an Ash Wednesday eucharist. Emphasises that Lent fasting was uniform; it is about giving up essentials and not luxuries; and it is about social justice and the redistribution of wealth. God is inviting us to say "Yes" to him during this Lent Yes to his grand rescue scheme, where we're brought back into a relationship with God – forgiven, restored and made whole. Yes to the promises made in our baptisms about following him as his disciples and living accordingly

<http://www.saintbarnabaschurch.org.uk/sermon060208.htm>

A Franciscan view of Ash Wednesday

Brother Justus is Minister Provincial of the Society of Saint Francis, one of the monastic orders of the Episcopal Church. He is stationed at Little Portion Friary on Long Island, New York. He is also a Deacon, and actively involved with the Episcopal Church's efforts in reclaiming and restoring the historic diaconate. On the Episcopal Church's Sermons that work site.

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sermons_that_work_7656_ENG_HTML.htm

From St Paul's - The Bishop of London

God created through love and for love. [Simone Weil]. Ash Wednesday invites us to resist the pressure of the passing moment, to acknowledge those parts of our life which have become stale and to open ourselves to the gift which Christ longs to impart, newness of life, the gift of the Easter or Resurrection life.

http://www.london.anglican.org/SermonShow_11592

A Kiwi perspective

A sermon which deals with the Bible passage competently. For some of us here, Ash Wednesday is a familiar land-mark. Ho-hum, Lent again, we think. But every Lent is different. God is continually moving in new ways. If we let God in, we run the amazing and frightening and exciting risk of having our familiar world turned upside down. Let us be open even to that.

For some of us, the call this Ash Wednesday may be for the first time to say yes to God - to open our hearts and lives to the transforming power of Christ.

<http://scifac.ru.ac.za/cathedral/sermons/20090225.htm>

Ash Wednesday 'folksy'

By Peter K. Perry of the US United Methodist Church. Not based on the day's biblical text but mainly on: nothing can separate us from the love of God.

<http://www.homiliesbyemail.com/Special/ashwed/sermon2.txt>

Reverend mommy's random thoughts

A site titled "Reverend mommy's random thoughts" might need to be approached warily. However, here you will find an interesting approach to the Joel passage on the theme "Are we overwhelmed" which identifies a list of things in modern living which may be responsible. Could be used for Mothers' Union address as well as congregational use.

<http://reverendmommy.blogspot.com/2009/02/ash-wednesday-sermon-joel-2.html>

Motherflash

And after “Reverend Mommy” comes “Motherflash” in the US mid-west in Minnesota but focussing on original sin. It has a Lutheran feel to it - after all it is Garrison Keillor country!
<http://www.motherflash.com/sermons/sermons3/ashwedbl.html>

General

Links to readings, studies and sermons on The Text This Week site.
<http://www.textweek.com/festivals/ash.htm>

Commentary notes on Bible passages on The Working Preacher site.
http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?lect_date=2/17/2010

POETRY**Ash Wednesday**

Shut out the light or let it filter through
 These frowning aisles as penitentially
 As though it walked in sackcloth. Let it be
 Laid at the feet of all that ever grew
 Twisted and false, like this rococo shrine
 Where cupids smirk from candy clouds and where
 The Lord, with polished nails and perfumed hair,
 Performs a parody of the divine.

The candles hiss; the organ-pedals storm;
 Writhing and dark, the columns leave the earth
 To find a lonelier and darker height.
 The church grows dingy while the human swarm
 Struggles against the impenitent body's mirth.

Ashes to ashes. . . . Go. . . . Shut out the light.
 And so the light runs laughing from the town,
 Pulling the sun with him along the roads
 That shed their muddy rivers as he goads
 Each blade of grass the ice had flattened down.

At every empty bush he stops to fling
 Handfuls of birds with green and yellow throats;
 While even the hens, uncertain of their notes,
 Stir rusty vowels in attempts to sing.

He daubs the chestnut-tips with sudden reds
 And throws an olive blush on naked hills
 That hoped, somehow, to keep themselves in white.
 Who calls for sackcloth now? He leaps and spreads
 A carnival of color, gladly spills
 His blood: the resurrection—and the light.

Louis Untermeyer

Marked by Ashes

Ruler of the Night, Guarantor of the day . . .
 This day — a gift from you.
 This day — like none other you have ever given, or we have ever received.
 This Wednesday dazzles us with gift and newness and possibility.
 This Wednesday burdens us with the tasks of the day, for we are already halfway home
 halfway back to committees and memos,
 halfway back to calls and appointments,
 halfway on to next Sunday,
 halfway back, half frazzled, half expectant,
 half turned toward you, half rather not.
 This Wednesday is a long way from Ash Wednesday,

but all our Wednesdays are marked by ashes —
we begin this day with that taste of ash in our mouth:
of failed hope and broken promises,
of forgotten children and frightened women,
we ourselves are ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
we can taste our mortality as we roll the ash around on our tongues.
We are able to ponder our ashness with
some confidence, only because our every Wednesday of ashes
anticipates your Easter victory over that dry, flaky taste of death.

On this Wednesday, we submit our ashen way to you —
you Easter parade of newness.
Before the sun sets, take our Wednesday and Easter us,
Easter us to joy and energy and courage and freedom;
Easter us that we may be fearless for your truth.
Come here and Easter our Wednesday with
mercy and justice and peace and generosity.
We pray as we wait for the Risen One who comes soon.

For over thirty years now, Walter Brueggemann (b. 1933) has combined the best of critical scholarship with love for the local church in service to the kingdom of God. Now a professor emeritus of Old Testament studies at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, Brueggemann has authored over seventy books. Taken from his [Prayers for a Privileged People](#) (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), pp. 27-28.