

## INTRODUCTION



### Ash Wednesday

The season of Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. It is an opportunity for us to grow in our awareness of God's presence in our lives.

Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is not a holy day of obligation, and yet it is one of the days during the liturgical year on which very large numbers of people participate in the ceremony of the distribution of ashes.

Ashes were an ancient symbol of repentance; they remind us of our mortality. On this day we recognize our human frailty. When we are marked with ashes we acknowledge our need to change ourselves at a deeper level and our willingness to enter into Lent as a time during which we will strive towards an inner conversion of heart.

We ask you Lord to be with us as we begin our Lenten fast and to help us to remember and to respond to your call to return to you with all our hearts.

**PLAY HYMN ON C.D.**

**READINGS AND PRAYERS OF YOUR CHOICE**

**DISTRIBUTION OF THE ASHES**

**Remember, man, that you are dust and to dust you will return**

**[Genesis 3:19]**

**Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel.**

**[Mark 1:15]**



**PRAYERS.**

**OUR FATHER ...**

**CONCLUDING PRAYER**

Lent is a time to remember that our faults can take us away from God and damage our relationships with others. During these forty days of Lent we pray that we may become close to God whose love for us has no limits and whose forgiveness knows no bounds. Look on us Father; touch our hearts and lives so that we may always turn back to you and be faithful in your service. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, on God for ever and ever.

## Mass Readings for Ash Wednesday

### First Reading (2:12-18)

A reading from the Prophet Joel

“But 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.

This is the word of the Lord.

### Responsorial Psalm

#### *Response*

Have mercy on us oh 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.  
Oh Lord open my lips  
And my mouth shall declare your praise.(R)

Second Reading                      5:20 – 6:2)

A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

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.

This is the word of the Lord.

Gospel

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Be careful not to parade your good deeds before others 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 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 people 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 will reward you".

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Prayers from Morning Prayer for Ash Wednesday**

As we begin the season of Lent, we give thanks to God the Father for this time of grace.  
Let us ask him to cleanse our hearts and strengthen us in love through the Holy Spirit.

(R) Give us Lord your Holy Spirit

Lord your word is life; may our lives be nourished and sustained by every word you  
speak ( R )

In the life of Jesus you have shown us the way of love; teach us to follow this way in the  
great and small events of life. ( R )

Grant us a spirit of self denial – and move us to help our brothers and sisters in their need.  
( R ).

Our Father ...