

**ASH WEDNESDAY**

**February 14, 2024**



# Ash Wednesday

## February 14, 2024



### GATHERING

#### Introduction

On Ash Wednesday, we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world

#### PRELUDE

#### PSALM

#### Psalm 51

#### Spoken in unison

- <sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your <sup>l</sup> steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out <sup>l</sup> my offenses.
- <sup>2</sup>Wash me through and through <sup>l</sup> from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me <sup>l</sup> from my sin.
- <sup>3</sup>For I know <sup>l</sup> my offenses,  
and my sin is ev- <sup>l</sup> er before me.
- <sup>4</sup>Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil <sup>l</sup> in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right <sup>l</sup> in your judgment.
- <sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born <sup>l</sup> steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my <sup>l</sup> mother’s womb.
- <sup>6</sup>Indeed, you delight in truth <sup>l</sup> deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom <sup>l</sup> deep within.
- <sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I <sup>l</sup> shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be pur- <sup>l</sup> er than snow.
- <sup>8</sup>Let me hear <sup>l</sup> joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken <sup>l</sup> may rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup>Hide your face <sup>l</sup> from my sins,  
and blot out <sup>l</sup> all my wickedness.
- <sup>10</sup>Create in me a clean <sup>l</sup> heart, O God,

- and renew a right spir- | it within me.
- <sup>11</sup>Cast me not away | from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
- <sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of | your salvation  
and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit.
- <sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways | to offenders,  
and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.
- <sup>14</sup>Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of | my salvation,  
and my tongue shall sing | of your righteousness.
- <sup>15</sup>O Lord, o- | pen my lips,  
and my mouth shall pro- | claim your praise.
- <sup>16</sup>For you take no delight in sacrifice, or | I would give it.  
You are not pleased | with burnt offering.
- <sup>17</sup>The sacrifice of God is a | troubled spirit;  
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will | not despise.

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*The congregation sits or kneels. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.*

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God, who brings us out of captivity into freedom, out of the wilderness into the promised land, out of death into life.

C **Amen.**

P 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 neighbors, 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 neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, 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 sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P Gracious God,

C **we confess that we have sinned in thought, work, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. Forgive us and give us strength to turn from sin and to serve you in newness of life. Amen.**

*Please stand*

### **PROCLAMATION OF FORGIVENESS**

P By water and the Holy Spirit, God gives you a new birth, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, + God Forgives you all of your sins. Almighty God strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life.

C **Amen.**

*Please be Seated*

### **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

The congregation comes to the font for Imposition of Ashes. The ministers apply ashes to the forehead of each person with the words:

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

*Congregation returns to their seats.*

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

C **that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

P By the cross and Passion of your Son, our Lord,

C **bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

P 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.

C **Amen.**

*Please Stand*

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**P** 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 Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

*Please Be Seated*

## **WORD**

### **First Reading: Isaiah 53:4-12**

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

*After the reading:*

**A** Word of God, Word of Life.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*Please Stand*

**GOSPEL: John 3:1-16**

P The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 3rd Chapter.

C: **Glory to you O Lord.**

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Please Be Seated*

**Lenten Worship: "Voices of the Passion"**

During Lent and Holy Week, we revisit the story of Jesus' suffering and death as told from the perspective of various characters in the drama of Jesus' passion. As they speak to us, we will discover how their story is also our story. We were there. We participated. We are the ultimate beneficiaries of the greatest story ever told.

**HOMILY**

**“NICODEMUS: THE JEWISH BELIEVER”**

John 3:1-16  
Isaiah 53:4-12



*Please Stand*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

Just As I Am, Without One Plea

ELW 592

**APOSTLES CREED**

**P** Let us confess our faith in the words of the Apostles Creed.

**C** **I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

A Renew your church, O God. When we have drifted from our call to proclaim repentance and to guide your people toward justice, lead us back to you. Encourage believers who hold the church's doors open to those who have felt excluded. Merciful God,

**C Receive our prayer.**

A Renew your creation, O God. Transform parched places into watered gardens and preserve every creature that awaits the arrival of spring. Turn each of us from practices of environmental exploitation to become responsible stewards of all you have made. Merciful God,

**C Receive our prayer.**

A Renew our civic life, O God. Teach those in authority to advocate for the liberation of all who are oppressed and grant them courage to make difficult decisions. Merciful God,

**C Receive our prayer.**

A Renew our lives, O God. Spare your people from diseases of the body, mind, or spirit and send healing to those overcome by illness or grief. Restore to us the joy of your salvation. Merciful God,

**C Receive our prayer.**

A Renew this congregation, O God. During these forty days of Lent, confirm our sense of mission and expand our imagination for ministry. Deepen our faith, increase our love, and draw us into your unfolding work of healing and restoration. Merciful God,

**C Receive our prayer.**

A As we mark ashes on our foreheads, we give you praise, O God, for all the saints who died and yet are alive with you. Receive us with them into your eternal embrace. Merciful God,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

**C Amen.**



## MEAL

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

P The Lord be with you.

**C And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

**C We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

### **Sanctus**

**C: 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.**

### **SETTING THE TABLE**

P In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours, now and forever. Amen!**

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P Come to Christ's banquet. Feast on God's gift of grace.

*Please Be Seated*

## **COMMUNION**

*All baptized Christians who seek the blessings of Christ's true body and blood in the bread and wine of Holy Communion are welcome at his table. There, they receive him and the new life he offers. Those who eat and drink at his table commit themselves to the care and redemption of all that God has made. If you are not baptized, contact Pastor Albertin to learn how you can receive the great gift God has for you in baptism. Today you are welcome to join us at Christ's table.*

*For those who choose not to commune or who have not yet received communion instruction a word of blessing will be offered.*

*Please Stand*

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

A We give you thanks, gracious God

**C Blessed Jesus, in this rich meal of grace, you have fed us with your body, the bread of life. Now send us forth to bear your life-giving hope to a world in need. Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

P You are children of God, anointed with the oil of gladness and strengthened for the journey. Almighty God, motherly, majestic, and mighty, ✝ bless you this day and always.

C Amen.

### **HYMN**

#### **Abide With Me**

ELW 629

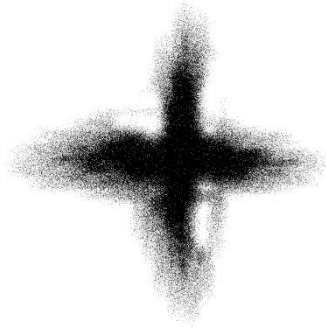
*Verses 1, 2 & 5*

### **DISMISSAL**

A Go in peace. Jesus meets you on the way.

C Thanks be to God.

### **POSTLUDE**



**Ash Wednesday** is named for the practice of imposing ashes. The use of ashes as a sign of repentance is an ancient practice, often mentioned in Scripture (for examples, see Job 42:6, Jeremiah 6:26, and Matthew 11:21). The early Christian church accepted the use of ashes from Jewish practice as an external mark of penitence.

Why use such an ancient symbol now? In our time ashes symbolize several aspects of our human experience. First, ashes remind us of God's condemnation of sin—as God said to Adam, "Dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

Second, ashes suggest cleansing and renewal. Ashes were used anciently in the absence of soap, and on Ash Wednesday the ashes are a penitential substitute for water as a reminder of our Baptism. Just as water both drowns and refreshes, so too ashes are a symbol of both death and renewal (as fields are sometimes burned in the spring to prepare for new growth.)

Third, ashes remind us of the shortness of human life—as we say at the time of burial of dead, "We commit his/her body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday is a reminder that one day those words will be said over our bodies.

Finally, ashes are a symbol of repentance. The imposition of ashes following the confession on Ash Wednesday is a sign that we have confessed our sinfulness, an outward sign of inward penitence, as well as a sign that we are dying and ourselves turning to ashes.