

Imposition of Ashes & Holy Communion for Ash Wednesday



Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
Joel 2:13

The Gathering

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

All and also with you.

Hymn

The president explains the meaning of Lent and invites the people to observe it faithfully

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.

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

The Collect

Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully.

Silence is kept.

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.

All Amen

The Ministry of the Word

*Two readings from Scripture precede the Gospel reading.
At the end of each the reader says*

This is the word of the Lord
All **Thanks be to God**

Psalm 51

All **Have mercy on me, O God, in your constant love;
in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences.
Wash away all my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin.
create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Give me the joy of your help again
and strengthen me with a willing spirit.**

All stand. When the Gospel is announced the reader says

Reader Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to *N*
All **Glory to you, O Lord,**

The Gospel is read and at the end

Reader This is the Gospel of the Lord
All **Praise to you, O Christ**

The Sermon

Confession

God the Father,
All **have mercy upon us.**
God the Son,
All **have mercy upon us.**
God the Holy Spirit,
All **have mercy upon us.**
Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity,
All **have mercy upon us.**

From all evil and mischief; from pride, vanity, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice; and from all evil intent,
All **good Lord, deliver us.**
From sloth, worldliness and love of money; from hardness of heart and contempt for your word and your laws,
All **good Lord, deliver us.**
From sins of body and mind; from the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil,
All **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,
All **good Lord, deliver us.**

By the mystery of your holy incarnation; by your birth, childhood and obedience; by your baptism, fasting and temptation,

All **good Lord, deliver us.**

By your ministry in word and work; by your mighty acts of power; and by your preaching of the kingdom,

All **good Lord, deliver us.**

By your agony and trial; by your cross and passion; and by your precious death and burial,

All **good Lord, deliver us.**

By your mighty resurrection; by your glorious ascension; and by your sending of the Holy Spirit,

All **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.

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

Silence is kept

Make our hearts clean, O God;

All **and renew a right spirit within us.**

All **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

Dear friends in Christ, I invite you to receive these ashes as a sign of the spirit of penitence with which we shall keep this season of Lent. God our Father, you create us from the dust of the earth: grant that these ashes may be for us a sign of our penitence and a symbol of our mortality; for it is by your grace alone that we receive eternal life in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

All **Amen.**

The president and people receive the imposition of ashes, the president first receiving the imposition from another minister. At the imposition the minister says to each person

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

The ashes are made from the blessed palms used in the Palm Sunday celebration of the previous year. The ashes symbolize penance and contrition, and they a reminder that God is gracious and merciful to those who call on Him with repentant hearts. The ceremony is also a sign of mortality to remind us of our death

Intercessions

After each section

Leader: Lord, hear us.

All: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Eternal God,
through the sacrifice of your Son
you have filled our suffering with your presence;
help us in our trials
and strengthen us in our weakness;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen**

As our Saviour has taught us, so we say:

All **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.

The Peace

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to his grace. The peace of the Lord be always with you
All **and also with you.**

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Hymn

The Eucharist

Risen Lord and Saviour, present among us with the wealth of your love. Cleanse us from sin and give us the faith to offer our praise and grow in your grace.

All Amen.

It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and praise, almighty God and everlasting Father, through Jesus Christ your Son. For in these forty days you lead us into the desert of repentance that through a pilgrimage of prayer and discipline we may grow in grace and learn to be your people once again. Through fasting, prayer and acts of service you bring us back to your generous heart. Through study of your holy word you open our eyes to your presence in the world and free our hands to welcome others into the radiant splendour of your love. As we prepare to celebrate the Easter feast with joyful hearts and minds we bless you for your mercy and join with saints and angels for ever praising you and saying:

All **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.**

Please be seated

Father, on the night before he died,
Jesus shared a meal with his friends.
He took the bread, and thanked you.
He broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this to remember me.
After the meal, Jesus took the cup of wine.
He thanked you, and gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood,
the new promise of God's unfailing love.
Do this to remember me.

All Great is the mystery of faith:
Christ has died:
Christ is risen:
Christ will come again.

All Father, as we bring this bread and wine,
and remember his death and resurrection,
send your Holy Spirit,
that we who share these gifts
may be fed by Christ's body and his blood.

All **Amen.**

All Pour your Spirit on us
that we may love one another,
work for the healing of the earth,
and share the good news of Jesus,
as we wait for his coming in glory.

All **Amen.**

All For honour and praise belong to you, Father,
with Jesus your Son, and the Holy Spirit:
one God, for ever and ever.

All **Amen.**

The president breaks the consecrated bread.

All Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup
 we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Blessed are those who are called to his supper.
All **Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

The Communion is received

Prayer after Communion

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life. give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive these his inestimable gifts, and also daily endeavour to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All **God of our pilgrimage,
you have fed us
with the bread of heaven.
Refresh and sustain us
as we go forward on our journey,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

The Dismissal

All This is love, not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son.
All He is the sacrifice for our sins,
that we might live through him.
All If God loves us so much
we ought to love one another.
All If we love one another
God lives in us.

Hymn

The Blessing

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

All Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Ashes and Perspective

Welcome to this special service of Holy Communion with the imposition of ashes. Life provides us with countless experiences that help keep things in perspective. We visit a hospital and see people enduring great physical suffering and suddenly the fact that we have the flu doesn't seem so monumental. We view documentaries about famine striking people all over the world and consequently the burnt toast is not catastrophic. We read news of whole societies suffering under repressive dictatorships, and the need to obey a speed limit does not so much fray our nerves.

People with wealth and influence die and are cremated. Power, ambition, worries, hassles, manipulations, and posturing are all reduced to a carton of ashes. The point of citing this is not to make us morbid, but to prompt us to reflect. Lent begins with ashes, because ashes can put things into perspective. On Ash Wednesday, we acknowledge our mortality, that all things will pass, and that we too will pass. None of us is indispensable. Family goes on, the economy goes one, the job goes on-life will go on, without us.

"You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

Lent is a time to reflect on matters that we might not reflect on at other times of the year. It is a time for putting things back into perspective, for taking a good look at ourselves, at what we have become, and at what we are doing with our lives.

Ashes provide us with a perspective about what counts and what doesn't. Ashes also inform us that our time is limited and that we should take advantage of the time we have left to continue our spiritual development. We welcome Lent, therefore, with ashes for the opportunities it will afford us to clear our vision and reset our sights. We have much to do before we turn to dust.

Lent is a time for tough questions. Where are you going in life? What are you doing with yourself? What kind of priorities do you live by? What changes should you need to make to ensure a more worthwhile life for yourself? What should you become more serious about? Less serious about? Are you preoccupied and overly concerned with trivia? Do you get angry over petty things? Do you lose sleep over matters that have little lasting import? Do you need to push yourself more on worthwhile projects? Do you need to slow down? Think in terms of ashes and see if it doesn't change your perspective.

Today we begin a spiritual time of reflection. In many churches there will be the occasion tonight to begin Lent with the imposition of ashes. This is the lighting of the Palm crosses from last year and the placing of a cross in ash on the forehead. It is a sign of the life of the cross, the acceptance of all that owning that cross can bring. Through this commitment we have access to spiritual growth and healing. Lent is a time to be penitent and to seek God's will for our life as surely as Jesus sought God's direction in the wilderness. We live our lives under the shadow of the cross and this is a good time to consider what the implications of that are. It is a time to say
*'teach me afresh, where I am going,
how do you want me to change?'*

In the Old Testament ashes were a sign of sorrow at having let God down they were a demonstration of looking for the new direction and being sorry for what was in the past. They were a sign of repentance and looking forward. The Christian response is of course to see the new direction for us all in the cross and we make the ashes into the sign of the cross. That is where we come to find God's forgiveness and direction for our lives.

Information for Communion

1. When Communion is received you will be invited forward. If you would like communion brought to you, please remain in your seat and inform the communion steward.
2. You are welcome to receive the bread and wine, but if for any reason you do not wish to receive, then please bring this order of service with you and hold it in your hand. The minister will then know not to offer the sacrament to you and will say a prayer of blessing instead.
3. If you wish to partake only of the bread, take the chalice or glass as it is presented and then give it back without drinking.
4. You may intinct if you prefer, holding the wafer and dipping it into the chalice, however please be especially careful to ensure that only the tip of the wafer is placed into the wine, do not dip your finger into the wine.
5. Gluten free wafers are available, please advise the minister.
6. At the distribution the minister will say words of administration to which the communicant may reply,
AMEN.