

# February 14, 2024

## Ash Wednesday



### ***Introduction to the day***

*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.*

## **GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

## **GREETING**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

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. **Amen.**

## **WORD**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

## **FIRST READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17**

A reading from Joel.

<sup>1</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
    sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
    for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—  
<sup>2</sup>a day of darkness and gloom,  
    a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness spread upon the mountains  
    a great and powerful army comes;  
their like has never been from of old,  
    nor will be again after them  
    in ages to come.

<sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says the LORD,  
    return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
<sup>13</sup>rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the LORD, your God,  
    for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
    and relents from punishing.

<sup>14</sup>Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,  
    and leave a blessing behind him,  
a grain offering and a drink offering  
    for the LORD, your God?

<sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sanctify a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;  
<sup>16</sup>gather the people.  
Sanctify the congregation;  
assemble the aged;  
gather the children,  
even infants at the breast.  
Let the bridegroom leave his room,  
and the bride her canopy.

<sup>17</sup>Between the vestibule and the altar  
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.  
Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,  
and do not make your heritage a mockery,  
a byword among the nations.  
Why should it be said among the peoples,  
'Where is their God?'"

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **PSALM: Psalm 51:1-17**

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.  
<sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me from my sin.**  
<sup>3</sup>For I know my offenses,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
<sup>4</sup>**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment. R**  
<sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my mother's womb.  
<sup>6</sup>**Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**  
<sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.  
<sup>8</sup>**Let me hear joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**  
<sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my wickedness.  
<sup>10</sup>**Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.**  
<sup>11</sup>Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup>**Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

<sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways to offenders,  
and sinners shall be restored 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, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall proclaim 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.

## **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10**

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

<sup>20b</sup>We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>6:1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.

<sup>2</sup>For he says,

“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,  
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Return to the LORD, your God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and  
abounding in steadfast love. (Joel 2:13)**

## **GOSPEL: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have

received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup>But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>16</sup>“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON

### INVITATION TO LENT

Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

### CONFESSION OF SIN

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. *(silence for reflection)*

Most holy and merciful God,

**we confess to you and to one another,**

**and before the whole company of heaven,**

**that we have sinned by our fault,**

**by our own fault,**

**by our own most grievous 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 shut our ears 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.**

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

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

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

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

**Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.**

## **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth.

May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

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

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

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.  
**Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of  
creation, and a world in need.

You call us to return to you, steadfast God. Renew a right spirit within the church and cleanse  
the hearts of your people. Strengthen those who proclaim your gospel in word and deed. Hear  
us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You sustain your creation, generous God. Supply all that is needful for life to flourish. Protect  
endangered species and fragile habitats. Teach us to live lightly upon the earth and to honor it as  
our home. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You seek justice and peace, righteous God. Rebuild cities and homelands devastated by war  
(*regions in conflict may be named*). Provide welcome, help, and safety to refugees. Prosper  
negotiations that lead to lasting peace among the nations. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is  
great.**

You care for all people, loving God. Heal any who are scarred by violence, addiction, or trauma  
of any kind. Comfort those who grieve and bring relief to any in pain. Hear us, O God. **Your  
mercy is great.**

You gather this assembly, abiding God. Unite us in serving our neighbors and working for  
justice. We pray for caregivers and people who are hospitalized, in treatment, or recovering  
from illness (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You redeem us from death, faithful God. We give thanks for those who served you in the  
church (*especially Cyril and Methodius, missionaries, whom we commemorate today*). Bring us  
with all the saints into everlasting joy. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through  
Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

## **MEAL**

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

## **OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray.

**God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **DIALOGUE**

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.**

## **PREFACE**

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 call your people to cleanse their hearts  
and prepare with joy for the paschal feast,  
that, renewed in the gift of baptism,  
we may come to the fullness of your grace.

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:

## **HOLY HOLY HOLY**

**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.**

## **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Blessed are you, O God of the universe.

Your mercy is everlasting

and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.

Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.

Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.

Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness  
to the land of milk and honey.



Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.  
Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.  
Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

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.

With this bread and cup  
we remember our Lord's passover from death to life  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

O God of resurrection and new life:  
Pour out your Holy Spirit on us  
and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
Bless this feast.  
Grace our table with your presence.  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.  
Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.  
Breathe new life into us.  
Send us forth,  
burning with justice, peace, and love.  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With [ name/s and ] your holy ones of all times and places,  
with the earth and all its creatures,  
with sun and moon and stars,  
we praise you, O God,  
blessed and holy Trinity,  
now and forever.  
**Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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**

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

## **COMMUNION**

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray.

**Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **SENDING**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

## **BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

## **DISMISSAL**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;  
be of good courage;  
hold fast to that which is good;  
render to no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;  
help the afflicted; honor all people;  
love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.**