



Where all find a welcome and are nurtured in their journey with Christ.

A liturgy for Ash Wednesday



The Gathering

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

Amen.

The Greeting

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

Introduction

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.

The Trisagion

Holy God,
Holy and Strong,
Holy and Immortal,
Have mercy upon us.

Hymn

Forty days and forty nights
thou wast fasting in the wild;
forty days and forty nights
tempted, and yet undefiled.

Sunbeams scorching all the day,
chilly dew-drops nightly shed,
prowling beasts about thy way,
stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.

Shall not we thy sorrows share,
and from earthly joys abstain,
fasting with unceasing prayer,
glad with thee to suffer pain?

And if Satan, vexing sore,
flesh or spirit should assail,
thou, his vanquisher before,
grant we may not faint nor fail.

So shall we have peace divine;
holier gladness ours shall be;
round us too shall angels shine,
such as ministered to thee.

Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
ever constant by thy side,
that with thee we may appear
at th'eternal Eastertide.

Words: G. H. Smyttan (1822-1870) and F. Pott (1832-1909)

Music: melody from 'Nürnbergisches Gesangbuch' (1676)

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.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah.

Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.
“Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,
and oppress all your workers.
Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

Is not this 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 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 the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many

generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Isiah 58.1-12

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Lord, teach us how to pray aright
with rev'ence and with fear;
though fallen sinners in thy sight,
we may, we must, draw near.

Our spirits fail through lack of prayer:
O grant us pow'r to pray;
and, when to meet thee we prepare,
Lord, meet us by the way.

God of all grace, we bring to thee
a broken, contrite heart;
give what thine eye delights to see,
truth in the inward part.

Faith in the only sacrifice
that can for sin atone,
to cast our hopes, to fix our eyes,
on Christ, and Christ alone.

Patience to watch and wait and weep,
though mercy long delay;
courage our fainting souls to keep,
and trust in thee always.

Give these, and then thy will be done;
thus, strengthened with all might,
we, through thy Spirit and thy Son,
shall pray, and pray aright.

Words: J. Montgomery (1772-1854)

Music: E. J. Hopkins (1818-1901)

Gospel Reading

A sung acclamation heralds the Gospel reading.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
The Lord is a great God, O that today you would
listen to his voice.
Harden not your hearts.

cf Psalm 95.3, 8

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All
the people came to him and he sat down and began
to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees

brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

John 8.1-11

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

The Reverend Paul Cowan

Chaplain to the Bishop of Oxford

The Liturgy of Penitence

Self-examination and Confession

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father,

have mercy on us.

God the Son,

have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit,

have mercy on us.

Trinity of love,

have mercy on us.

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.

Lord, have mercy.

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.

Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you, Lord ...
all our past unfaithfulness:
the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

Our negligence in prayer and worship
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.

Lord, have mercy.

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 judgements,
for uncharitable thoughts towards our neighbours
and for our prejudice and contempt
towards 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.

Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
that we may show 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.

Silence is kept.

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

The Imposition of Ashes

Dear friends in Christ, I invite you to reflect on your mortality as on behalf of us all I 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
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.

Amen.

The president receives the imposition of ashes, and other images follow during which a setting for the words traditionally used at the imposition of ashes is sung.

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

At the end the president says

God our Father,
the strength of all who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers;
and because, in our weakness,
we can do nothing good without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in keeping your commandments
we may please you, both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession concluding with the Lord's Prayer

The response to the bidding.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

At the end

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

**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.

Romans 5.1,2

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Hymn

Lead us, heav'nly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no hope but thee;
yet possessing ev'ry blessing
if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us:
all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
lone and dreary, faint and weary,
through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heav'nly joy,
love with ev'ry passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy:
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

Words: J. Edmeston (1791-1867)

Music: F. Filitz (1804-1876)

Responsory

This is love, not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son.

He is the sacrifice for our sins,
that we might live through him.

If God loves us so much
we ought to love one another.

If we love one another
God lives in us.

cf 1 John 4.12

Excerpts from the Poem ‘Ash Wednesday’ by T. S. Eliot

V – First Stanza

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word, the Word within
The world and for the world;
And the light shone in darkness and
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.

Part VI – Conclusion

Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still
Even among these rocks,
Our peace in His will
And even among these rocks
Sister, mother
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,
Suffer me not to be separated
And let my cry come unto Thee.

The Blessing

May God the Father,
who does not despise the broken spirit,
give to you a contrite heart.

Amen.

May Christ,
who bore our sins in his body on the tree,
heal you by his wounds.

Amen.

May the Holy Spirit,
who leads us into all truth,
speak to you words of pardon and peace.

Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

The Dismissal

May hope of a new beginning surround our steps
as we walk together through this holy season of Lent.

Amen.

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