



ASH WEDNESDAY AT HOME

Wednesday 17th February 2021

If you are housebound or self-isolating at this time, please use these prayers to unite yourself with the worship of the Universal Church, and your own Parish this Ash Wednesday. If alone, read or say these prayers quietly to yourself. If with another, or in a family, someone should read the "leader" parts, and others respond. It might be suitable to find a special, quiet place at home for your prayers.

The main symbol of this day is, of course, the ashes, which are blessed during Mass today and sprinkled on the heads of those attending. Since you are not attending Mass or a Service at Church, the following is a suggestion for a focus in your prayers at home.

Before your prayers, take a small bowl and fill it with something normally thrown away – ashes, sand, dead leaves, even dry soil from the garden, scraps of paper – and place it next to a candle in your prayer space. This is to remind you of the "ashes" of Lent, a symbol of our acknowledgment that there are aspects of our lives that need to be washed away, and of the wilderness of forty days that we journey through with Jesus. Let this bowl stay there for the whole of Lent. When we get to Easter, you will clean out the bowl and replace the ashes with fresh water, as a sign of new life and a reminder of baptism.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

A: You are merciful to all, O Lord, and despise nothing that you have made. You overlook people's sins, to bring them to repentance, and you spare them, for you are the Lord our God.

Sign of the Cross

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

A: Amen.

Introduction

L: Today marks the beginning of the holy season of Lent, when every year the whole Church embarks on a journey: a journey from ashes to the font, from sin and death to forgiveness and new life. Let us begin this holy journey with joy, trusting in the love and mercy of our heavenly Father, revealed in the selfless sacrifice of Jesus. May our prayer, fasting and almsgiving help to purify us once more,

so that we may reclaim our baptismal innocence at Easter.

Opening Prayer

L: Let us pray.

Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

A: Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gospel Reading Matt 6:1-6,16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men 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 men's 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 men 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 who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Reflection

We would never set out on a journey without knowing our destination! And that knowledge of our destination will tell us what we need to take with us on our journey. Lent is a journey, that is meant to take us somewhere new in our lives. We use the traditional methods Jesus mentions in this Gospel – prayer, fasting and almsgiving – to take ourselves to a new place. The ashes of this day are a symbol, not of what we take with us, but what we must leave behind: sin, bad habits, engrained attitudes, negative aspects of our life that we perhaps take for granted – "Oh, this is just how I am!" or "I've always been like this!" Ashes belong in the bin! Ashes are to be thrown away, not cherished! We begin our Lenten journey saying to the Lord "Yes, I have ashes in my life, things I'm not proud of, things that don't belong in your children. Help me throw them out!" We have 40 days (actually slightly more!) to use God's grace to rid ourselves of our ashes, and arrive at our destination – the new you - at Easter.

For our Younger Friends

You have probably been thinking about something to "give up for Lent" – perhaps sweets, or chocolate, or crisps. Perhaps you might be more imaginative – giving up Netflix, or your tablet or mobile phone? Hang on - that seems a lot! For a whole 40 days?! Lent is

all about being a better person, so perhaps a good thing to give up is bad habits – though that might be even harder! Have another think now, and make God a promise that you will do your best, whatever you decide to give up!

If gathering as a family, perhaps now continue to discuss what Lent means to you. If alone, think about what key message you take from the Scriptures today.

Act of Repentance

Contemplate your bowl of ashes/sand for a few moments, thinking of what your Lenten journey will involve, and offering to God your Lenten promises.

Then say this prayer:

O God, who desire not the death of sinners, but their conversion, mercifully hear our prayers and in your kindness be pleased to bless us, who acknowledge we are but ashes and shall return to dust, that we may, through a steadfast observance of Lent, gain pardon for sins and newness of life after the likeness of your Risen Son. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

A: Amen.

Intercessions

L: We should pour forth prayers at all times but above all in these days of Lent we ought to watch more intently with Christ and direct our petitions more fervently to God.

R: For the whole Christian people, that in this sacred time they may be more abundantly nourished by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Lord, in your mercy

A: Hear our prayer.

R: For the whole world, that in lasting tranquillity and peace our days may truly become the acceptable time of grace and salvation. Lord, in your mercy

A: Hear our prayer.

R: For sinners and the neglectful, that in this time of reconciliation they may return to Christ. Lord, in your mercy

A: Hear our prayer.

R: For ourselves, that God may at last stir up in our hearts aversion for our sins. Lord, in your mercy

A: Hear our prayer.

Please add your own prayers for the needs of the Church, the world and your local community. You may wish to add particular prayers for family members, friends or neighbours in need at this time.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

L: At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

A: 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.

Amen.

L: We entreat you, O Lord, that, through works of penance and charity, we may turn away from harmful pleasures and, cleansed from our sins, may become worthy to celebrate devoutly the Passion of your Son. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

A: Amen.

Before Spiritual Communion

L: Loving Father, you will that our self-denial should give you thanks, humble our sinful pride, contribute to the feeding of the poor, and so help us imitate you in your kindness. At the Last Supper Jesus showed us the way of selflessness, as he gave his Body and Blood for his people. Even though we are not in Church, and not able to receive communion today, we open our minds and hearts now to your generous love and the gift of Jesus your Son, welcoming him spiritually into our lives.

Spiritual Communion

A: My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love you above all things and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my soul so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever. Amen.

Pause for a moment of silent prayer and reflection.

Thanksgiving Psalm

L: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

A: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

L: 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.

A: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

L: 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.

A: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

L: 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.

A: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

L: Give me again the joy of your help; with a spirit of fervour sustain me, O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise.

A: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

Final Prayer and Blessing

L: Let us pray.

May the graces we have received sustain us, O Lord, so that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you and be for us a healing remedy. Through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

L: May the Lord ✠ bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

A: Amen.

L: Let us bless the Lord!

A: Thanks be to God!