

A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday
For use in homes either privately or with others

This service should be conducted in a quiet place in the home. You might like to light a candle. Begin with a few moments of silence to prepare yourself for prayer and the service.

Opening Prayer. *Read aloud by all present.*

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in me (us) a new and contrite heart, that worthily lamenting my (our) sins and acknowledging my (our) wretchedness, I (we) may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

One or both of the following passages of scripture are read aloud.

A Reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2)

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

The Word of the Lord.

or A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (Matthew 6:16-21)

Jesus said, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The Word of the Lord

Invitation to the observance of a holy Lent. *(Read by one person if a group is present.)*

From the early days of our faith, Christians have observed the remembrance of Christ's passion and resurrection with great reverence. It became the custom to prepare for that observance by a season of prayer and fasting, and the reconciliation of those who had been separated from the community of faith. By keeping the season of Lent, I (we) take to heart God's call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and practice in my (our) daily life (lives) the work of reconciliation. The church invites its people therefore, 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 present pray aloud:

Almighty God, I (we) have been created out of the dust of the earth: Grant to me (us) the remembrance of my (our) mortality and penitence, that I (we) may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that I (we) am (are) given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Making the sign of the cross on your own forehead say: Remember that I am dust, and to dust I shall return.

Psalms 51 *Read aloud by all present.*

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your
loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.
- 5 And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment
- 6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- 7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

- 8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
- 14 I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.
- 15 Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.
- 16 Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- 17 Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice; *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.
- 18 The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise

Litany of Penitence

Read aloud by all present:

Most holy and merciful Father:
I (we) confess to you,
and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
that I (we) have sinned by my (our) own fault
in thought, word, and deed;
by what I (we) have done, and by what I (we) have left undone.

One person may read the first part of the petition with others joining for the response that is in italics.

I (we) have not loved you with my (our) whole heart, and mind, and strength. I (we) have not loved my (our) neighbors as myself (ourselves). I (we) have not forgiven others, as I (we) have been forgiven.
Have mercy on me (us), Lord.

I (we) have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. I (we) have not been true to the mind of Christ. I (we) have grieved your Holy Spirit.
Have mercy on me (us), Lord.

I (we) confess to you, Lord, all my (our) past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of my (our) life (lives),
I (we) confess to you, Lord.

My (our) self-indulgent appetites and ways, and my (our) exploitation of other people,
I (we) confess to you, Lord.

My (our) anger at my (our) own frustration, and my (our) envy of those more fortunate than myself (ourselves),
I (we) confess to you, Lord.

My (our) intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and my (our) dishonesty in daily life and work,
I (we) confess to you, Lord.

My (our) negligence in prayer and worship, and my (our) failure to commend the faith that is in me (us),
I (we) confess to you, Lord.

Accept my (our) repentance, Lord, for the wrongs I (we) have done: for my (our) blindness to human need and suffering, and my (our) indifference to injustice and cruelty,
Accept my (our) repentance, Lord.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward my (our) neighbors, and for my (our) prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from me (us),
Accept my (our) repentance, Lord.

For my (our) waste and pollution of your creation, and my (our) lack of concern for those who come after me (us),
Accept my (our) repentance, Lord.

Restore me (us), good Lord, and let your anger depart from me (us);
Favorably hear me (us), for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in me (us) the work of your salvation,
That I (we) may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
Bring me (us) with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

Read aloud by all present:

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

Grant us, O God, true repentance and the gift of your Holy Spirit, that those things may please you which I (we) do on this day, and that the rest of my (our) life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last I (we) may come to your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Peace

The peace of Christ be always with me (us).

The dismissal

May I (we) go in peace, in the Name of Christ. Amen.