



# ASH WEDNESDAY

*Ashes are a sign, a reminder and an invitation. Archaeologists tell us that the people of Israel were not alone in using ashes in rituals of purification. Ashes appear in Phoenician burial art and Arabic expressions. Ashes were a sign of grief, mourning, humiliation and penitence. When Job loses everything, he sits among the ashes. Cursed and overrun by enemies, the Psalmist “eats ashes like bread, and mingles tears with drink.” Ashes are what are left after destruction. After chaos or catastrophe, ashes are what remain.*

*Ashes also remind us of a common origin. The second chapter of Genesis tells of how we were created from the dust of the ground. Though we may spend our lives trying to distinguish ourselves from others, running after success and trying to feel different from others, the dust and ashes remind us that we are all made of the same stuff. We are reminded not only of our beginning but also of our end. On this day, the First Day of Lent, ashes are imposed, normally with the words, “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Those words apply to us all.*

*While ashes may signify and remind, they also invite. They invite us to repentance. They invite us to turn again to God and to receive new life. Isaiah brings glad tidings to the people of Israel, “to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning.” Ashes are not the end but are just the beginning. They begin a season that moves us through silence and longing into a season of joy and resurrection.\**

## **Making Ashes at home in preparation for this service**

Take some leaves from the garden and dry them. Then heat them in small amount of olive oil in a frying pan. Watch and stir the leaves until they are dark brown, going black. Remove the leaves and allow to cool, then either with a mortar or a sieve grind the leaves, add olive oil and proceed as above. Do not worry if the ash is not smooth and is bitty.

\* These three paragraphs are from an article by Fr John Beddingfield in *Angelus On Line Newsletter*, produced by St Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church, New York.

## The Greeting

The Lord be with you.  
**All** and also with you.

## Introduction

Dear friends 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.

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes,  
an ancient sign, speaking of the frailty and uncertainty of human life,  
and marking the penitence of the community as a whole.

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 Collect

*The priest introduces a period of silent prayer saying*

Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully.

*Silence is kept*

Holy God, our lives are laid open before you:  
rescue us from the chaos of sin and through the death of your Son  
bring us healing and make us whole in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

# Hymn

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

2 Sunbeams scorching all the day,  
Chilly dewdrops nightly shed,  
Prowling beasts about thy way,  
Stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.

3 Let us thine endurance share,  
And awhile from joys abstain,  
With thee watching unto prayer,  
Strong with thee to suffer pain.

4 And if Satan, vexing sore,  
Flesh or spirit should assail,  
Thou, his vanquisher before,  
Grant we may not faint nor fail.

5 So shall we have peace divine.  
Holier gladness ours shall be,  
Round us, too, shall angels shine,  
Such as ministered to thee.

6 Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,  
Ever constant by thy side,  
That we thee we may appear  
At the eternal Eastertide.

Text: George Hunt Smyttan (1822—1870) and Francis Pott (1832—1909)

Music: Melody attrib. Martin Herbst (1654—1681); harm. William Henry Monk (1823—1889)

77 77

AUS DER TIEFE

**First Reading:**        Genesis 28:10-22

*The reader introduces the reading saying:*

A reading from the Book of Genesis

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran.  
He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night,  
because the sun had set.  
Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head  
and lay down in that place.  
And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth,  
the top of it reaching to heaven;  
and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.  
And the Lord stood beside him and said,  
“I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac;  
the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring;  
and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth,  
and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east  
and to the north and to the south;  
and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring.  
Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,  
and will bring you back to this land;  
for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”  
Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said,  
“Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!”  
And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place!  
This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”  
So Jacob rose early in the morning,  
and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar  
and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel;  
but the name of the city was Luz at the first.  
Then Jacob made a vow, saying,  
“If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go,  
and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear,  
so that I come again to my father’s house in peace,  
then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar,  
shall be God’s house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one tenth  
to you.”

*At the end the reader says:*

The Word of the Lord.

**All    Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel Reading:

John 8:1-11

*When the Gospel is announced the reader says:*

**All** The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Then each of them went home,  
while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.  
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.”

*At the end, the reader says:*

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

## Homily

*Silence for reflection follows the Homily*

## The Litany of Penitence

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

*All* God the Father,  
**have mercy on us.**

*All* God the Son,  
**have mercy on us.**

*All* God the Holy Spirit,  
**have mercy on us.**

*All* Trinity of love,  
**have mercy on us.**

*All* **Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed.**

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.  
*All* **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.  
*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

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

Our self indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people.  
*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

Our anger at our own frustration  
and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.  
*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts  
and our dishonesty in daily life and work.  
*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

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

**All 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.

**All 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.

**All Accept our repentance, Lord.**

For our waste and pollution of your creation  
and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

**All Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

**All 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.**

**All**

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord.

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

*Silence is kept.*

**All 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 Sign of Ashes

*The priest invites people to lay a hand on the ashes they have at home and says:*

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.**

Dear friends in Christ, I invite you, if you have ashes prepared and to hand,  
to apply these ashes to your forehead as a sign of the spirit of penitence  
with which we shall keep this season of Lent.

*Each person dips their thumb into the ash mixture  
and makes a sign of the cross on their forehead with them.*

*After a moment of silence all join to say this prayer:*

**All    Truly dust we are,  
and to dust we shall return;  
And truly yours we are,  
and to you we shall return.  
[Lord] help this to be a time of turning round and beginning again.  
Through the forty days of Lent,  
help us to follow you and to find you:  
In the discipline of praying  
and in the drudgery of caring—in whatever we deny ourselves,  
and whatever we set ourselves to learn or do...  
Help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem  
to the waving palms of the people's hope,  
to their rejection,  
to the cross and empty tomb.  
Help us to perceive new growth  
amid the ashes of the old.  
Help us,  
carrying your cross,  
to be signs of your Kingdom.  
Amen.**

*A prayer (adapted) by Jan Sutch Pickard*

*Silence is kept.*



*The priest then says:*

The Lord enrich you with his grace,  
and nourish you with his blessing;  
the Lord defend you in trouble  
and keep you from all evil;  
the Lord accept your prayers,  
and absolve you from your offences,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

*All*    **Amen.**

## **The Prayers**

*The priest introduces a period of silent prayer during which people may share their own prayers and concerns with all.*

## **The Lord's Prayer**

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

*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.**

## Hymn

NEARER, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee!  
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,  
Still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to Thee.

*Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
nearer to Thee!*

**2** Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,  
Darkness be over me, my rest a stone.  
Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God to Thee.

*Nearer, my God, to Thee...*

**3** There let the way appear, steps unto Heav'n;  
All that Thou sendest me, in mercy given;  
Angels to beckon me nearer, my God, to Thee.

*Nearer, my God, to Thee...*

**4** Then, with my waking thoughts  
bright with Thy praise,  
Out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;  
So by my woes to be nearer, my God, to Thee.

*Nearer, my God, to Thee...*

**5** Or, if on joyful wing cleaving the sky,  
Sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I'll fly,  
Still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to Thee.

*Nearer, my God, to Thee...*

Text: Sarah Flower Adams (1805—1848)

Music: Lowell Mason (1792—1872)

64 64 66 64

BETHANY (EXCELSIOR)

## 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, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

**All**    **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All**    **In the name of Christ.**  
**Amen.**

*Common Worship Services and Prayers for the Church of England: Times and Seasons*, material from which is included in this service, is copyright © The Archbishop's Council, 2006.

*The Book of Alternative Services*, material from which is included in this service as permitted by Canon B5, is copyright © The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, 1985.

*Eggs and Ashes: Practical & liturgical resources for Lent and Holy Week* by Ruth Burgess and Chris Polhill, material from which is included in this service, is copyright © Wild Goose Publications, 2004.

CCLI License I339638.