



Resources for Parish Worship

The Ash Wednesday theme is easy to identify – Our lives, like David’s, are on a trajectory of self-destruction and harm to others. God calls us to hear his warning and convicting voice, and to turn back to the ways of mercy, justice and humble service. The way God offers is not an easy or comfortable way, but it is the way of life. And so, while Ash Wednesday is a day of solemnity and repentance, recognising that we are “sinners in need of a Saviour”, it is also a day of celebration, because what is offered to us is a path that leads to life. And so, as we begin the metaphorical journey of following Jesus through the wilderness, we are given. already now – right at the beginning – a glimpse of the resurrection that awaits.

It seems to have become a normal practice to deny responsibility or to avoid acknowledging when our actions are destructive or harmful. Little true repentance has followed the economic crisis, a lot of work is being done to deny human responsibility for climate change, and the broken systems that burden developing countries with debt that outweighs whatever aid they receive are not easily acknowledged in the corridors of power. Yet, before we can possibly begin to create the world we long for, we must admit our sin – our greed, our carelessness, our ignorance, our self-centredness, our idolatry, our consumption. And to do this work of repentance effectively, we need a global spiritual revival, for only in the light of God’s reign can we see our need, and get a vision for what we, as a species, can become.

While David’s repentance after the Bathsheba incident is famous, it’s often ignored that it took a confrontation by Nathan the prophet to bring out this repentance. What would repentance look like if we made it a habit that we practiced without confrontation? Ash Wednesday offers us a doorway into developing the discipline of confession and repentance, which not only builds our spiritual connection with God, but which also strengthens our relationships, gives us a clearer and more humble perspective on ourselves, and which leads us to live well in the world, bringing life, rather than bringing pain. Where in our communities and churches could we use a more consistent practice of repentance?

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines The lectionary readings are the same for every Ash Wednesday in the Revised Common Lectionary.

The First Reading - Joel 2: 1-2, 12-17

A proclamation that the Day of the Lord has arrived, with a call for repentance, and a plea for God's mercy.

The Psalm - Psalm 51: 1-18

David's plea for God to cleanse him after his adultery with Bathsheba is exposed by Nathan the prophet.

The Second Reading - 2 Corinthians 5: 20b - 6:10

Paul explains the suffering he and other apostles have endured in order to proclaim God's appeal for repentance, and God's offer of salvation.

The Gospel Reading - Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

The most authentic way to give, fast and pray – Jesus explains the true practice of the Lenten disciplines.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Joel%202:%201-2,%2012-17%20%0Acw%20Psalm%2051:%201-18%0A2%20Corinthians%205:%2020b%20-%206:10%0AMatthew%206:%201-6,%2016-21

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty and everlasting God,
who hatest nothing that thou hast made,
and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent;
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts,
that we worthily lamenting our sins,
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This collect may be said after the Collect of the day until Easter Eve.

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 our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
Give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

O God, our teacher and our judge:
Enrich our hearts with the goodness of your wisdom
and renew us from within:
that all our actions, all our thoughts and all our words
may bear the fruit of your transforming grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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 our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

L Let us pray to the Lord.

P May our prayer be acceptable to God, our Rock and our Redeemer.

L Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation
that we may show forth your glory in the world.

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

- various intercessions ending with "Lord hear our prayer" and
response "And in your love, answer"

Father in heaven, the greatness of Your love is beyond words to describe.
By the power of Your Spirit, liberate us from all self centeredness, that
we may be free to love others as Christ loves us.... Lord hear our
prayer....

Lord God of Hosts: Make of us pilgrims throughout these forty days. Lead
us through discipline to discipleship, through fasting to feasting, through
privation to freedom. Free us from our own struggles, so that we may more

fully serve one another.... Lord hear our prayer....

Loving Master and faithful friend - help us to be obedient and joyful, humble and caring, merciful and loving. Anchor us in your live giving word and make us radiant for you - fitting ambassadors of your message of reconciliation..... Lord, hear our prayer....

Father of all mercy - as we work together with Christ, help us to not to accept your grace in vain, but to remember that now is the day of salvation, and to call upon you and serve you as you desire..... we ask these things in his most glorious name. Amen

POST COMMUNION

Holy God
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
May we who are partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know
his power to change and save.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord,
in this sacrament you have nourished us
with the spiritual food of the body and blood of your dear Son.
Not only with our lips
but with our lives may we truly confess his name,
and so enter the kingdom of heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,
you have given your only Son to be for us
both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life:
Give us grace
that we may always most thankfully receive
these his inestimable gifts,
and also daily endeavour ourselves
to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Father,
through your goodness
we are refreshed through your Son
in word and sacrament.
May our faith be so strengthened and guarded
that we may witness to your eternal love
by our words and in our lives.
Grant this for Jesus' sake, our Lord.

Loving God,
as a mother feeds her children at the breast,
you feed us in this sacrament with spiritual food and drink.
Help us who have tasted your goodness
to grow in grace within the household of faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,
you have given your only Son to be for us
both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life:
Give us grace
that we may always most thankfully receive
these his inestimable gifts,
and also daily endeavour ourselves
to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O Lord of Grace, lead us and guide us from a life of self-centredness and satisfaction for what we are and what we do to a life of dependence on you. Inspire our hearts that we rise beyond the daily trifles of our existence and join with you in love and concern of the whole creation, that we may always remind ourselves that we are the disciples of one who did not help himself but was a man for others. Grant that we may, through our life and example, work for a world where God is praised and we all live like salt and leaven in the midst of this mass of humanity and in a bond of charity. O God the Holy Spirit, inspire, hallow and guide us in this vocation of wholeness and healing, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Church of Bangladesh*

Righteous God,
in humility and repentance
we bring our failures in caring, helping, and loving,
we bring the pain we have caused other,
we bring the injustice in society of which we are a part,
to the transforming power of your grace.
Grant us the courage to accept the healing you offer
and to turn again toward the sunrise of your reign,
that we may walk with you in the promise of peace
you have willed for all the children of the earth,
and have made known to us in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Gracious and merciful God,
you see into the secret places of our hearts,
where we mourn our sins.
As we turn again to your grace, receive our prayers.
Intercessions

Look with mercy on our contrite hearts,
wash from us the stain of iniquity,
and create a new and right spirit in us,
that we may declare your praise
and offer an acceptable sacrifice in these Lenten days;
through Christ Jesus, who bore our sins on the cross. Amen.

O God, you delight not in pomp and show,
but in a humble and contrite heart.
Overturn our love of worldly possessions
and fix our hearts more firmly on you,
that, having nothing,
we may yet possess everything,
a treasure stored up for us in heaven. Amen.

Father in Heaven,
Protect us in our struggle against evil.
As we begin the discipline of Lent,
make this season holy by our self-denial.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God, for ever and ever.
International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL)

SEE ALSO - PARISH SUPPORT PACKS FOR ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT -

<http://www.churchnewsireland.org/wp-content/uploads/PSP-LENT-PRAYERS.pdf>

<http://www.churchnewsireland.org/wp-content/uploads/PSP-ASH-WEDNESDAY.pdf>

<http://www.churchnewsireland.org/wp-content/uploads/Lent-Ash-Wednesday-additional.pdf>

PRAYER: A LITANY

The sung response is by Jacques Berthier, Tiaze. *'Together in Song'*:730

Remember, loving God, what you have wrought in us,
and not what we deserve.

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into you kingdom.

As your Son have asked us to take up our own cross and follow,
let us neither be timid nor rash disciples.

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into you kingdom.

As you have asked us to truly love each other.
deliver us from shallow sentiment and pretentious piety.

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into you kingdom.

As you have called us to be ambassadors of reconciliation,

please make us worthy of that calling;

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into you kingdom.

That the poor and the meek may inherit both earth and heaven,
and the merciful obtain much mercy.

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into you kingdom.

That the peacemakers may live as children of God,
and those who are persecuted may rejoice and be glad;

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into you kingdom.

That those who hunger and thirst may be satisfied
and the pure in heart may come to see God.

Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into you kingdom.

Remember, loving God, what you have wrought in us,
and not what we deserve.

Through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-ashwed.php>

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17:

"Rend your hearts and not your clothing." This verse ties into Psalm 51's theme: it is our heart, our inside, our soul that God wants us to worry about most - not sacrifices, not outward signs. (theme of the gospel as well) Inside, not outside.

"[God] is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing." I like these descriptions, especially in the midst of the Old Testament, which can have a different image of God.

"Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast." Joel urges the people to gather together, to plead to God as a community for forgiveness. When do we do that? Gather as a community and ask God to have mercy on us?

Psalm 51:1-17:

Ah, a favorite psalm. And like Joel, an element of confession. This psalm is one I'm mostly likely to use if I'm feeling the need to come before God in a confessional mode. Do you have a confessional prayer in church every week? We do not, and I think as Protestants, we sometimes get nervous about confession, even corporate. But even if we don't share sins with a priest, confession is a necessary part of our relationship - any healthy relationship, really.

Where I disagree with the psalmist, (thought to be David writing after the sin with Bathsheeba) is in his claim: "against you, you alone, have I sinned." Rarely do our sins only affect God - that's the worst about them - our sin hurts others. David's sin, for instance, resulted in a man's death, and a child's death, according to scriptures.

"the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." Inside, not outside. Rituals are meaningless to God if they are not accompanied by real change in who we are and how we live!

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10:

"an acceptable time" - The Greek word here is one of my favorites, one I learned during my freshman year of college when I felt like I had just uncovered one of the great mysteries of the world: *kairos*, or "God's right time for action" as Dr. Emmanuel Twesigye taught. This is as opposed to *chronos*, regular ol' time.

Paul describes a paradox/contradictory state - impostors yet true, unknown yet know, dying yet alive. Sometimes being a disciple can feel like this: pulled constantly between to states of being you never thought could go together.

Paul gives himself quite a list of things that make him and colleagues "servants of God." Stuff like this is always what makes me think Paul has such a boastful side. Oh well, I guess he's entitled a fault...

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21:

Again the Lenten theme: God wants our insides, not our outsides.

Interesting, isn't it, to compare Jesus' words to our current practices of worship - we still like to "sound the trumpet" when we give, we like to pray with fancy words in

long winded ways. We like to be rewarded, preferably instantly, for our good and holy behavior.

"Where you treasure is, there your heart will be also." Notice that it is not where you heart is, there you will find your treasure. But first look to what you treasure - and that's where your heart, your whole person is. So what do you treasure? Possessions? Then that is what you are: your things.

By Beth Quick

SERMON

Ever since the bottom fell out of the sackcloth and ashes business, we've not known what to do about Lent.

By the Very Rev. Anthony F.M. Clavier

Ever since the bottom fell out of the sackcloth and ashes business, we've not known what to do about Lent. "What do I give up?" seems to be the primary question, an inversion of Jesus' call for us to give. Lent isn't a time to slim or to save money by not buying chocolate or going out to dine. Too easily our resolutions begin to look like holy variations on New Year's resolutions, and we know how long they last!

Part of the problem is that we individualize Lent. We begin with me. Because we begin with me, the whole thing slides into another form of personal spirituality, perhaps somewhat ruined by our sly hints to others about just what it is we are sacrificing.

Sacrifice in Christianity, as with our Jewish ancestors, means the offering of life. Its culmination is Jesus' offering for us on Calvary. The central way we commemorate this is in our offering of the Eucharist, a corporate offering "together" of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. In baptism, each of us is joined to those who "in Christ" offer the sacrifice, the life-offering of the Savior. We make this offering through Jesus for the world, in all its reality: for the homeless, refugees, those starving to death, those terrified by war and civil war, and even the rich living hopeless lives of denial and indulgence. In short, we get involved with the reality of life as it is.

Lent's forty days prepare us for the Cross and the Resurrection, and no good intentions about giving up something gets us to that "Green Hill far away." True, once our goal for Lent is established, fasting and abstinence is a way to keep us on track, but the goal comes first. The goal is simple but profound. It begins with our parish church. How does our community of the faithful intend to spend Lent together? What extra acts of worship or study will be added to the calendar? In what ways will the parish reach out to the world? We begin there. These extras on the calendar are not for the holy few. They determine how each of us may spend Lent, and guide us to choose individual acts of love that fit into that wider program.

At the same time, we remember that what we do doesn't earn us God's love. The question rather is how may I, and we, as a parish, become worthy of Christ's death and passion? How do we deserve His conquering death for us and giving us eternal life?

Ash Wednesday - March 1, 2017

On the one hand, we can't earn and can never deserve God's love for us in Christ. But we can open ourselves to the gift and seek to rid ourselves of those things that get in the way of God's redeeming grace. We used to call these impediments the Seven Deadly Sins. Obviously gluttony was among them. Those old sins – do look them up or Google them – were neat ways of reminding us just how "self" gets in the way of service. Now, of course, you may feel you do pretty well in avoiding these failings and fallings. But just ask your partner, your children, your parents, or your best friends. With a little nudging they will come up with examples of bad temper, feeling sorry for yourself, being envious, or angry.

The point isn't that we dwell on these things, but that we offer them daily to God in our devotions, certain that God forgives and strengthens us.

The gospel today reminds us that the smudge of ashes on our foreheads may either be a boast, or it may be a sign to us and to others that this Lent will be about more than giving up chocolate; it will be a time when God's redeeming work transforms each of us and our parishes.

So may it be.

— Fr. Tony Clavier is rector of [St. Paul's Episcopal Church](#), La Porte, Indiana, in the Diocese of Northern Indiana. He is also dean of the Michigan City deanery.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"Becoming a Place of Resurrection," Charles Hoffacker, Episcopal Digital Network
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2016/01/20/becoming-a-place-of-resurrection-ash-wednesday-c-2016/>

"Good News in the Ashes," the Rev. Dr. Amy E. Richter, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2015/02/05/ash-wednesday-abc-2015/>

"What Audience?" the Rev. Dr. Amy E. Richter, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2014/02/18/ash-wednesday-abc-2014/>

We are welcome to rest Rev.Charles Hoffacker, Episcopal Digital Network
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/02/17/ash-wednesday-b-february-22-2012/>

Ash Wednesday - Sermons that work

Insights from a member of the Society of St Francis. A number of simple illustrations included which throw light on this day.

http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/sermons_that_work_7656_ENG_HTM.htm

Rend your hearts - Rockies net

Scroll down - Emphasis on fasting.

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-ashwed.php>

Basics of Ash Wednesday - Agenda of Prophets

Ash Wednesday - March 1, 2017

Lent is a period of preparation for Easter, and it's a season of the Church's year where the emphasis is on penitence. That doesn't mean we're obliged to reflect in a gloomy or cynical or hopeless way about how weak and sinful human beings are. The Season of Lent is really about the fact that in Christ *God has rescued us* from our weakness and sinfulness, and so if we turn to God, conversion and holiness and the real fulfilment of our lives are possible. Today's readings bring that meaning out.

http://www.agendaforprophets.org.uk/displayhomily.php?homily_id=25

Making an impression - Bruce Pever

Short and to the point. Scroll down.

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C19ashwd.htm>

["Keep It To Yourself,"](#) Christopher Burkett, *PreacherRhetorica*,

<http://www.preacherrhetorica.com/ash-wednesday-homily.html>

CHILDREN

Worshipping with Children - Ideas for Ash Wednesday

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/12/year-c-ash-wednesday-february-13-2013.html>

[Three Reasons to Include Children on Ash Wednesday,](#) Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/three-reasons-to-include-children-on.html>

Ash Wednesday with Children and Families, Faith Formation Journeys

<http://faithformationjourneys.org/?p=1939>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

1st Reading Joel 2: 1–2, 12–17

210 Holy God of righteous glory

538 O Lord, the clouds are gathering

Psalms Psalm 51: 1–18

630* Blessed are the pure in heart

297* Come, thou Holy Spirit, come

614* Great shepherd of your people, hear

208 Hearken, O Lord, have mercy upon us

553* Jesu, lover of my soul

305 O Breath of life, come sweeping through us

638* O for a heart to praise my God

557* Rock of ages, cleft for me

2nd Reading 2 Corinthians 5: 20b–6: 10

643* Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

566* Fight the good fight with all thy might

352* Give thanks with a grateful heart

417 He gave his life in selfless love

322 I bind unto myself today (* vv, 1, 2, 8 & 9)

587* Just as I am, without one plea
652* Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
487* Soldiers of Christ, arise
488* Stand up, stand up for Jesus

The Gospel Matthew 6: 1–6, 16–21

207* Forty days and forty nights
646* Glorious things of thee are spoken
619* Lord, teach us how to pray aright
363* O Lord of heaven and earth and sea
625 Prayer is the soul's sincere desire