

Liturgy
Ash Wednesday

GATHERING

We are gathered to worship God in spirit and in truth.

**LORD, You have been our dwelling place
in all generations.**

Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

**LORD, teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy,
that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.**

Let Your work appear to Your servants,
and Your majesty to their children.

Let the favor of the LORD our God be upon us.

And establish the work of our hands for us.

Yes, establish the work of our hands.

The Covenant Love of the LORD endures forever.

— from Psalm 90

Wondrous Love

What wondrous love is this,

O my soul, O my soul?

What wondrous love is this,

O my soul?

What wondrous love is this

That caused the Lord of bliss

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul,

For my soul,

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul?

When I was sinking down,

Sinking down, sinking down,

When I was sinking down, sinking down;

When I was sinking down

Beneath God's righteous frown,

Christ laid aside His crown for my soul,

For my soul,

Christ laid aside His crown for my soul.

And when from death I'm free,

I'll sing on, I'll sing on;

And when from death I'm free,

I'll sing on.

And when from death I'm free,

I'll sing and joyful be.

And through eternity I'll sing on,

I'll sing on;

And through eternity I'll sing on.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2013. Ellen Koehler.
All Rights Reserved.

Words: traditional American Folk Hymn; first pub. 1811.

Tune: William Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1835.

LECTIONARY for Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalm 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

This quiet, simple service of Holy Communion and the imposition of ashes (for those who wish it) is the traditional beginning to the season of Lent.

Traditionally, Lent has been a time of focus and reflection on the atoning and reconciling work of Christ. For centuries, Christians have observed this six-week period preceding the anniversary of the Savior's death on the cross as a special season of fasting, repentance and prayer. For many, Lent has taken on the additional characteristic and practice of spiritual discipline—a time of putting something off (a habit perhaps, an attitude, or an indulgence) in order to make time and room in our lives for those activities and attitudes that draw us closer to God and enable us to serve others. During Lent, perhaps more consciously than in other seasons of the Christian year, we seek to become more like Christ—in His devotion to the Father's will, in His acts of love and service, and also in His sufferings—that we may increasingly be formed into His image and filled with His heart and mind.

In this liturgy, we use the Scriptures from the lectionary, and a few others that are frequently used in Ash Wednesday services, to focus our minds, hearts, souls, and strength on the journey of Lent as we seek to follow Christ more fully and to walk in His own footsteps.

INVOCATION

Almighty and merciful God, You called us forth from the dust of the earth and breathed into us the breath of life. You claimed us for Christ in the waters of our baptisms. You despise nothing You have made, and You forgive the sins of all who are penitent.

Look upon us and bless our journey through the desert of Lent to the font of rebirth.

**Create and make in us new and contrite hearts,
that, truly repenting of our sins,
and acknowledging our brokenness,
we may obtain from You, the God of all mercy,
full pardon and forgiveness,
through Your Son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.**

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 58:1-12 (Reading)

SECOND LESSON: Psalm 51:1-17 (Antiphonal Reading and Sung Refrain)

Refrain (sung)

Create in Me a Clean Heart

Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, my God,
And renew a right spirit within me.
(Repeat)

Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord;
Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation,
And renew a right spirit within me.

CCLI Song #96927 ©1982 Bases Loaded Music. Brown Bannister.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to Your lovingkindness;
in Your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.*

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

*Against You only have I sinned,
and done what is evil in Your sight;
and so You are justified when you speak,
and upright in Your judgment.*

Surely, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and a sinner from my mother's womb.

*Yet behold, You desire truth deep within me,
and in the hidden places
You will make me know wisdom.*

Refrain (sung)

This is the traditional prayer of Invocation for Ash Wednesday.

This setting of Create in Me a Clean Heart is one of our favorites. But there are many wonderful arrangements of the text of Psalm 51 that can be adapted for use here.

The Psalm is arranged for two readers or two groups within the congregation. For this confessional psalm, it is often very moving to divide the congregation in half for antiphonal reading.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
*Make me to hear joy and gladness,
that the bones You have broken may rejoice.*
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
and sustain me with a willing spirit.
*Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
and sinners will turn back to You.*
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness,
O God of my salvation;
then my tongue will sing of Your righteousness.
*O Lord, open my lips,
that my mouth may declare Your praise.*
For You do not delight in sacrifice,
otherwise I would give it;
You are not pleased with burnt offering.
*The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God,
You will not despise.*

Refrain (Sung)

Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, my God,
And renew a right spirit within me.
Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, my God,
And renew a right spirit within me,
and renew a right spirit within me.

SILENCE

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF LENTEN DISCIPLINE

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

**Almighty God, You have created us out of the dust of the earth
and breathed into us the breath of life. Grant that these ashes
may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence,
so we may remember that only by Your gracious gift
are we given eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.**

(Those who wish to have ashes imposed will come forward.)

Here is Love

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Lovingkindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.

This is a time for the pastor or other leader to give a few words of teaching about the season of Lent, Lenten disciplines, or a particular focus or theme that will be followed by the church community throughout the next several weeks.

On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And Heav'n's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.

Of Your fullness You are pouring
Your great pow'r and love anew,
Without measure, full and boundless,
Drawing out our hearts to You.
You alone will be our glory,
Nothing in the world we see.
You have cleansed and sanctified us,
You Yourself have set us free.

Let us all, Your love accepting,
Love You ever, all our days;
Let us seek Your kingdom only,
And our lives be to Your praise.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2011 Ellen Koehler.
William Rees (vs. 1-2); transl. from Welsh by William Edwards (1900);
verses 3-4 attributed to William Williams (adapted by Ellen Koehler);
Hymn tune: VANCOUVER, Robert Lowry, 1876.

THIRD LESSON: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 (Reading)

Lord, Have Mercy

Jesus, I've forgotten the words that You have spoken,
Promises that burned within my heart have now grown dim.
With a doubting heart I follow the paths of earthly wisdom;
Forgive me for my unbelief, renew the fire again.

Chorus:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy on me.
Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy on me.

Verse 2:

I have built an altar where I've worshipped things of man;
I have taken journeys that have drawn me far from You.
Now I am returning to Your mercies ever flowing;
Pardon my transgressions, help me love You again.

Verse 3:

I have longed to know You, and all Your tender mercies,
Like a river of forgiveness, ever flowing without end.
So I bow my heart before You in the goodness of Your presence,
Your grace forever shining like a beacon in the night.

THE TABLE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of Your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again!

The Lord's Prayer (spoken)

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 debts

As we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom,

And the power, and the glory,

Forever. Amen

I Will Wait for You (Psalm 130)

Out of the depths I cry to You,

In darkest places I will call.

Incline Your ear to me anew,

And hear my cry for mercy, Lord.

Were You to count my sinful ways,

How could I come before Your throne?

Yet, full forgiveness meets my gaze,

I stand redeemed by grace alone.

Chorus

I will wait for You, I will wait for You;

On Your word I will rely.

I will wait for You, surely wait for You,

Till my soul is satisfied.

So put your hope in God alone,

Take courage in His pow'r to save,

Completely and forever won

By Christ's emerging from the grave.

Chorus

Now He has come to make a way,
And God Himself has paid the price,
That all who trust in Him today
Find healing in His sacrifice.

Chorus

I will wait for You, I will wait for You,
Through the storm and through the night.
I will wait for You, surely wait for You,
For Your love is my delight.

CCLI Song #7118914 ©2018 Getty Music Publishing | Jordan Kauflin Music | Matthew Merker Music |
Townend Songs. Jordan Kauflin, Matthew Merker,
Keith Getty, Stuart Townend.

PASTORAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE JOURNEY OF LENT

FOURTH LESSON: Psalm 103:3-4, 8-10, 13-14 (Responsorial)

Bless the Lord

Refrain:

Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's holy name;
Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life.

Cantor:

It is God who forgives all your guilt,
Who heals ev'ry one of your ills,
Who redeems your life from the grave,
Who crowns you with love and compassion.

Refrain

Cantor:

The Lord is compassion and love,
Slow to anger and rich in mercy.
God does not treat us according to our sins
Nor repay us according to our faults.

Refrain

Cantor:

As a Father has compassion on his children,
The Lord has pity on those who fear Him;
For God knows of what we are made,
God remembers that we are dust.

Refrain

Songs and Prayers from Taizé; ©1991 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France

SENDING FORTH

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

**On this journey of Lent,
may we be reconciled.**

As we work together with Him, we urge you also
not to accept the grace of God in vain.

For now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!

**On this journey of Lent,
may we accept the grace of God.**

Therefore, live as servants of God,
approved and commended in Christ:
through great endurance; in afflictions and hardships;
by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit,
genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; –

**On this journey of Lent,
may we so live.**

With weapons of righteousness
for the right hand and for the left;
in ill repute and good repute;
as unknown, yet well-known and accepted in Him;
dying to self, yet alive in Him;
as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;
as poor, yet making many rich;
as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

**On this journey of Lent,
may we take up the cross of Christ
as we depart now in peace and in silence.**

– based on 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

All depart in silence.

Copyright ©2012-2025 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.

URL: <https://www.clerestorynotes.com>