

Worship in the Home: Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021

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Worship in the Home

Ash Wednesday February 17, 2021

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

You may prepare for this service of prayer at home by finding a place to pray and lighting a candle there. You may also set out a bowl of ashes, a bowl of soil, or a bowl of water.

If you decide to use ashes, soil or water to mark the sign the cross during this home prayer, think of this: all three signify death and new life — the ashes from the palm branches of last year, common soil since human beings in Genesis 2 are earth creatures made of dust, and water which in baptism joins us to the death of Christ. You may be able to receive safely for your use ashes from your own congregation. Soil can simply be dug from the earth near where you live. Water can be any water, perhaps from the tap in your home.

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

One person begins:

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God,
the keeper of the covenant,
the source of steadfast love,
our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

A brief silence is kept before the Prayer of the Day.

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

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

Because of the coming day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community declares that God is gracious and asks God to spare the people lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near— ²a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come. ¹²Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for the LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. ¹⁴Who knows whether the LORD will not turn and relent, and leave behind a blessing, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. ¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 51:1-17

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your ¹steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out ¹my offenses.

²Wash me through and through ¹from my wickedness, and cleanse me ¹from my sin.

³For I know ¹my offenses, and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil ¹in your sight; so you are justified when you speak and right ¹in your judgment.

⁵Indeed, I was born ¹steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my ¹mother's womb.

⁶Indeed, you delight in truth ¹deep within me, and would have me know wisdom ¹deep within.

⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I ¹shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

⁸Let me hear ¹joy and gladness; that the body you have broken ¹may rejoice.

⁹Hide your face ¹from my sins, and blot out ¹all my wickedness.

¹⁰Create in me a clean ¹heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹Cast me not away ¹from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of ¹your salvation and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

¹³Let me teach your ways ¹to offenders, and sinners shall be re- ¹stored to you.

¹⁴Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of ¹my salvation, and my tongue shall sing ¹of your righteousness.

¹⁵O LORD, o- ¹pen my lips, and my mouth shall pro- ¹claim your praise.

¹⁶For you take no delight in sacrifice, or ¹I would give it. You are not pleased ¹with burnt offering.

¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a ¹troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will ¹not despise.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.

^{20b}We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{6:1}As we work together with God, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ²For God says,

"At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you."

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! ³We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

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

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

On Ash Wednesday, with a day of fasting and repentance, we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter. Marking our foreheads with dust or water, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the mark traces the life-giving cross that was indelibly placed on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that "now is the day of salvation." Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Restore in Us, O God" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 328), "Create in Me a Clean Heart" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 188), "Just As I Am, without One Plea" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 592), "Return to God" (All Creation Sings 921). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[Create in Me a Clean Heart](#)

[Just As I Am, Without One Plea](#)

[Return to God](#)

A Confession of Sin follows.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

Most holy and merciful God,

**we confess to you and to one another,
and before the whole company of heaven,**

that we have sinned by our fault,

by our own fault,

by our own most grievous fault,

in thought, word, and deed,

by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have shut our ears 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.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

Signing with ashes, soil, or water may follow.

Persons living together may sign each other on the forehead and persons living alone may mark their own forehead.

When ashes are used in the service, the forehead of each person may be signed with a cross of ashes, while these words are said:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

If soil is used, these words are said:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

If water is used, these words are said:

Remember that you were buried with Christ in baptism. Repent and believe in the gospel.

After the signing, one person may conclude with these words:

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

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

Then pray these intercessions:

On this Ash Wednesday, we pray for the church and for all in need. Let these bids encourage our spoken or silent prayers.

Let us pray for the church throughout the world.

Let us pray for our congregation.

Let us pray for everyone who is preparing for baptism at Easter.

Let us pray for the health of plants and animals.

Let us pray for all who care for the earth.

Let us pray for peace throughout the world.

Let us pray for an increase of justice in our land.

Let us pray for a spirit of concord throughout our society.

Let us pray for the hungry, the homeless, the unemployed.

Let us pray for the end of this pandemic.

Let us pray for all who are sick or suffering.

Let us pray for all who today will die.

Let us pray for the desires of our hearts.

Let us thank God for all who have gone before us in the faith.

Into your hands, merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "On My Heart Imprint Your Image" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 811), "Your Heart, O God, Is Grieved" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 602), "Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 608), "When It Seems the Day Will End" (All Creation Sings 1034). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[On My Heart Imprint Your Image](#)

[Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling](#)

[When it Seems the Day Will End](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you. (For your information, we have a secure mail box.)

Offering Prayer

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever.

Amen.

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Kyrie in Procession](#);" "[Not What These Hands Have Done](#)," "[Just As I Am, without One Plea](#)."

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain and selected hymns for limited use. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. To purchase copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *All Creation Sings* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648. Selected hymns from *All Creation Sings* will be provided for limited use.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Ash Wednesday is February 17th – we will not be having services, Bethel also will not be having services.

Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.

Annual Meeting March 14th following worship.

Special Meeting, April 11th following worship.

Synod Assembly, 30 April – 2 May.

Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wings, Steve Murdock, Bob Broberg, Carole Holten, Donna Jackson-Hein.