

Ash Wednesday Service 2023

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made and 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 Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Joel 2:1-2,12-17

Blow 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-- a 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.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather 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.

Between 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?'"

Psalm 103

Benedic, anima mea

Bless the Lord, O my soul, *

and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, *

and forget not all his benefits.

He forgives all your sins *

and heals all your infirmities;

He redeems your life from the grave *

and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness;

He satisfies you with good things, *

and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

The Lord executes righteousness *

and judgment for all who are oppressed.

He made his ways known to Moses *
and his works to the children of Israel.
The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.
He will not always accuse us, *
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he removed our sins from us.
As a father cares for his children, *
so does the Lord care for those who fear him.
For he himself knows whereof we are made; *
he remembers that we are but dust.
Our days are like the grass; *
we flourish like a flower of the field;
When the wind goes over it, it is gone, *
and its place shall know it no more.
But the merciful goodness of the Lord endures for ever on those who fear him, *
and his righteousness on children's children;
On those who keep his covenant *
and remember his commandments and do them.
The Lord has set his throne in heaven, *
and his kingship has dominion over all.
Bless the Lord, you angels of his, you mighty ones who do his bidding, *
and hearken to the voice of his word.
Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, *
you ministers of his who do his will.
Bless the Lord, all you works of his, in all places of his dominion; *
bless the Lord, O my soul.
Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. World without end. Amen.

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

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

For he 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!

We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute.

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see-- we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

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

The Gospel of the Lord according to Matthew.

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus said, "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.

"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. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"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. But 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.

"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.

But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so 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.

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Homily

Hymn

Just As I Am

*Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them

by a season of penitence and fasting. T

his season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.

Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their trust and faith.

I invite you, therefore, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.

And, to make a right beginning of this holy season, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now say together Psalm 51, praying to the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

Psalm 51

Miserere mei, Deus

[said by all]

- 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

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 own 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, Lord.

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, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

We confess to you, Lord.

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

We confess to you, Lord.

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,

Accept our repentance, Lord.

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

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

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us; **Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.**

Let us pray together:

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.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we pray together:

**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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing and Dismissal

Grant, most merciful Lord, to your faithful people, pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve you with a quiet mind, through Christ our Lord. Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.