

A SHORT SERVICE AT HOME
FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we begin the season of Lent. And for the next few weeks, until Easter, we are asked to look at our lives and ask what we can do to make them better. We are asked to look at ourselves and ask how we can become better people; be more caring for example, less aggressive, less selfish, less argumentative, more honest. And from that recognition we are called to grow into the best possible version of ourselves we can be.

OPENING PRAYER

And so, let us pray.

God our Father,
you guide and direct us on our journey through life.
Be with us as we begin
our Lenten journey of repentance and hope.
Help us to grow closer to you during this holy season.
Help us to do your will each day during Lent
And become the people you created us to be.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Reading comes from the Book of a Wise Man called Joel.

The Lord says, "Now, come back to me with all your heart.

Go without food, and cry and be sad."

Tearing your clothes is not enough to show you are sad.

Let your heart be broken.

Come back to the Lord your God. He is kind and shows mercy.

He doesn't become angry quickly. He has great love.

He would rather forgive than punish.

Who knows? Maybe the Lord will change his mind and leave behind a blessing for you.

Then you may give grain and drink offerings to the Lord your God.

Blow the trumpet in Jerusalem. Call for a special time of going without food. Call for a special meeting. Bring the people together.

Make the meeting holy for the Lord. Bring together the elders.

Bring together the children, even babies that still feed at their mothers' breasts.

The bridegroom should come from his room.

The bride should come from her bedroom.

The priests, the Lord's servants, should cry.

They should cry between the altar and entrance to the Temple.

They should say, "Lord, have mercy on your people.

Don't let them be put to shame.

Don't let other nations make fun of them.

Don't let people in other nations ask,

'Where is their God?'"

The Lord Restores the Land

Then the Lord became concerned about his land.

He felt sorry for his people.

The word of the Lord.

The Reading comes from the Book of Praise.

R/. God, be merciful to me because you are loving.

Because you are always ready to be merciful,
wipe out all my wrongs.
Wash away all my guilt
and make me clean again. *R/.*

I know about my wrongs.
I can't forget my sin.
You are the one I have sinned against.
I have done what you say is wrong.
So you are right when you speak.
You are fair when you judge me. *R/.*

You want me to be completely truthful.
So teach me wisdom.
Take away my sin, and I will be clean.
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Make me hear sounds of joy and gladness.
Let the bones you crushed be happy again. *R/.*

Create in me a pure heart, God.
Make my spirit right again.
Do not send me away from you.
Do not take your Holy Spirit away from me.
Give me back the joy that comes when you save me.
Keep me strong by giving me a willing spirit. *R/.*

The reading comes from the Gospel of St Matthew.

“Be careful! When you do good things, don’t do them in front of people to be seen by them. If you do that, then you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“When you give to the poor, don’t be like the hypocrites. They blow trumpets before they give so that people will see them. They do that in the synagogues and on the streets. They want other people to honour them. I tell you the truth. Those hypocrites already have their full reward. So when you give to the poor, give very secretly. Don’t let anyone know what you are doing. Your giving should be done in secret. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites. They love to stand in the synagogues and on the street corners and pray loudly. They want people to see them pray. I tell you the truth. They already have their full reward. When you pray, you should go into your room and close the door. Then pray to your Father who cannot be seen. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

The gospel of the Lord.

(It might be helpful to talk here about the readings and about how you will remember Lent)

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.

God our Father, all life comes from you,
you know what we want and what we find difficult.
Make our hearts new again and help us live good lives.
Help us to reach out to others
and to share your love with all people.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the Father bless us,
for he has adopted us as his children,
May the Son come to help us,
for he has welcomed us as his brothers and sisters,
and may the Spirit be with us,
for he lives within us all.

And may almighty God bless us all,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.