

A Brief Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

For use with groups gathered in a public place.

The Minister briefly states the purpose of this gathering and an invitation to the observance of a holy Lent, in these or similar words:

Dear People of God: From the early days of our faith, Christians have observed the remembrance of Christ's passion and resurrection with great reverence. It became the custom to prepare for that observance by a season of prayer and fasting, and the reconciliation of those who had been separated from the community of faith.

By keeping the season of Lent, we take to heart God's call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and practice in our daily lives the work of reconciliation.

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

And, to begin this season in the right way, let us now receive the reminder of our mortal nature with prayer and gratitude for God's redeeming work.

The Minister says:

God be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Almighty and merciful God, you hate nothing you have made, and forgive the sins of all who are penitent; create in us new and contrite hearts, so that when we turn to you and confess our sins and acknowledge our need, we may receive your full and perfect forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. **Amen.**

The Word of God

The Minister or another person reads

A Reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

(2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2)

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

The Word of the Lord.

or

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

(Matthew 6:16-21)

Jesus said, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The Word of the Lord

The Imposition of Ashes

After the reading, the Minister says the following prayer:

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

The ashes are imposed with the following words

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

Confession and Absolution

when all have received ashes, the Confession of Sin is said:

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
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;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

or a portion of Psalm 51 may be used as a form of confession:

Psalm 51 (1-5, 8-12)

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.**

**Wash me through and through from my wickedness
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**

**Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure;
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.**

**Make me hear of joy and gladness,
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

**Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquities.**

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

**Cast me not away from your presence
and take not your holy Spirit from me. Amen.**

The Minister says:

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

A Deacon or Lay Minister leading this service substitutes "us" for "you" and "our" for "your."

The Minister then says:

The peace of Christ be always with you.

The people may respond:

And also with you.

And the service concludes as the sign of peace is exchanged among all the congregation.

or the service may conclude with the dismissal:

Go in peace, in the Name of Christ. **Amen.**

If a printed liturgy is not provided, the Minister reads the Confession of Sin, which the people affirm by their "Amen." and the responses to the readings, the Peace, are not expected and the salutation ("God be with you/And also with you") is not used.