



Return from Exile

A LENTEN JOURNEY

Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2018

ASH WEDNESDAY DIVINE SERVICE

HEART TO HEART: SACKCLOTH AND ASHES TO ROBES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Sackcloth and ashes: the signs of mourning and repentance in the pages of Scripture. Today we begin our Lenten journey; today we begin our return from exile. This is not a journey that begins with rejoicing and excitement; rather it begins with ashes. Our Lenten journey begins with ashes on our foreheads, a sign of broken and repentant hearts. God does not desire our sacrifices, as if we could atone for or cover our own sin. God desires broken and contrite hearts which He will not despise. Any efforts to cover up, to pay for, or to atone for our own sin only result in more sackcloth and ashes—even death. It is God who responds to the ashes of our repentance by sending His only begotten Son. Jesus Christ, on the cross, has washed our foreheads of the ashes of our sins and removed the sackcloth of our guilt and clothed us in His robes of righteousness and garments of salvation. The pure and holy white linen garments that adorn the saints in heaven cover us as we long for the day when we will join them around the throne.

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ASH WEDNESDAY ADDRESS

P Dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day the Church begins a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection. Our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope.

With that in mind, this year our theme for our Lenten worship will focus upon the journey, and our overall theme will be “Return from Exile: A Lenten Journey.” We begin our journey today wearing sackcloth and ashes while lamenting our sins. We then complete our journey rising with Christ out of Baptism wearing robes of righteousness.

Let us pray that our dear Father in heaven, for the sake of His beloved Son and in the power of His Holy Spirit, might richly bless this Lententide for us so that we may come to Easter with glad hearts and keep the feast in sincerity and truth.

LITANY

P O Lord,
C **have mercy.**
P O Christ,
C **have mercy.**
P O Lord,
C **have mercy.**
P O Christ,

C **hear us.**

P God the Father in heaven,

C **have mercy.**

P God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

C **have mercy.**

P God the Holy Spirit,

C **have mercy.**

P Be gracious to us.

C **Spare us, good Lord.**

P Be gracious to us.

C **Help us, good Lord.**

P By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your holy nativity; by Your Baptism, fasting, and temptation; by Your agony and bloody sweat; by Your cross and passion; by Your precious death and burial; by Your glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:

C **Help us, good Lord.**

P In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment:

C **Help us, good Lord.**

P We poor sinners implore You

C **to hear us, O Lord.**

P To prosper the teaching of Your Word; to bless our prayer and meditation; to strengthen and preserve us in the true faith; and to give heart to our sorrow and strength to our repentance:

C **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

P To draw all to Yourself; to bless those who are instructed in the faith; to watch over and console the poor, the sick, the distressed, the lonely, the forsaken, the abandoned, and all who stand in need of our prayers; to give abundant blessing to all works of mercy; and to have mercy on us all:

C **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

P To turn our hearts to You; to turn the hearts of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; and graciously to hear our prayers:

C **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

P Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

C **we implore You to hear us.**

P Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C **have mercy.**

P Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C **have mercy.**

P Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C **grant us Your peace.**

P O Christ,

C **hear us.**

P O Lord,

C **have mercy.**

P O Christ,

C **have mercy.**

P O Lord,

C **have mercy. Amen.**

P O God, You desire not the death of sinners, but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. We implore You to have compassion on the frailty of our mortal nature, for we acknowledge that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Mercifully pardon our sins that we may obtain the promises You have laid up for those who are repentant; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

+ THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES +

The congregation may come forward to receive ashes in the sign of the cross.

- P** Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

After receiving the ashes, each person returns to his place in silence.

+ CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION +

Stand

- P** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

- C** **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

- P** Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

- C** **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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 justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

- P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins.

As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

+ SERVICE OF THE WORD +

PSALMODY *Psalm 51:1–13 (antiphon: v. 17)*

P: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love;

C: **according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

P: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

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

P: Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight,

C: **so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment.**

P: Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

C: **Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart.**

P: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

C: **wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

P: Let me hear joy and gladness;

C: **let the bones that You have broken rejoice.**

P: Hide Your face from my sins,
C: **and blot out all my iniquities.**

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

P: Cast me not away from Your presence,
C: **and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.**

P: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
C: **and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

P: Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
C: **and sinners will return to You.**

P: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
C: **a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.**

KYRIE

P In peace let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

C **Amen.**

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you.

G **And also with you.**

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, our manmade garments of righteousness are but filthy rags, tainted with evil thoughts, unholy sexual desires, selfish wants, impure motives, jealousy, anger, envy, drunkenness, strife, idolatry, and much more. Therefore, we are but dust, and to dust we shall return. But You are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Repentance is Your good gift, so that we are then able to rend our hearts and not our garments, and that You may create in us clean hearts, hearts of flesh and not of stone. Give us firm trust in Your promises made to us for the sake of Jesus, who endured our temptation yet without sin; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

G **Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Joel 2:12–19*

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to Me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
and rend your hearts and not your garments.”
Return to the LORD, your God,
for He is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and He relents over disaster.

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;
consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
gather the people.
Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her chamber.

Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep
and say, "Spare Your people, O LORD,
and make not Your heritage a reproach,
a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Then the LORD became jealous for His land
and had pity on His people.
The LORD answered and said to His people,
"Behold, I am sending to you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no more make you
a reproach among the nations.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE *Revelation 7:9–14*

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

VERSE FOR LENT



C Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for He is gra - cious and



mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in



HOLY GOSPEL *Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21*

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixth chapter.

C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when 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 when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when

you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

HYMN OF THE DAY – We Are Exiles from the Garden

We are exiles from garden,
Banished by our sinful choice,
Terrified to seek His pardon,
Hiding from our Father's voice.
Underneath the branches swaying,
Sweat and blood fall to the ground.
In the darkness, Christ is praying;
He comes forward to be bound.

Leaves will fail our vain concealing
Our true nakedness and shame.
We must rend our hearts, revealing
All our guilt and sinful blame.
Jesus takes our flesh and sentence
As His clothes are claimed below.
We fall down in true repentance;
His new robe He will bestow.

On the mount, the Lord is waiting
For the proper sacrifice.
What is worth His wrath abating?
Who could pay the dreadful price?
God the Son will be the scion.
God the Father will provide.
God the Spirit points to Zion;
There, with God, we will abide.

On this journey we are taking,
We fear not what lies in store.
Though our feeble wills are breaking,
We know Christ has gone before.
As we walk the way completed,
On His throne, the Savior waits.
Death and hell have been unseated.
We behold the open gates!

SERMON

Apostles' Creed

**C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and
the dead.**

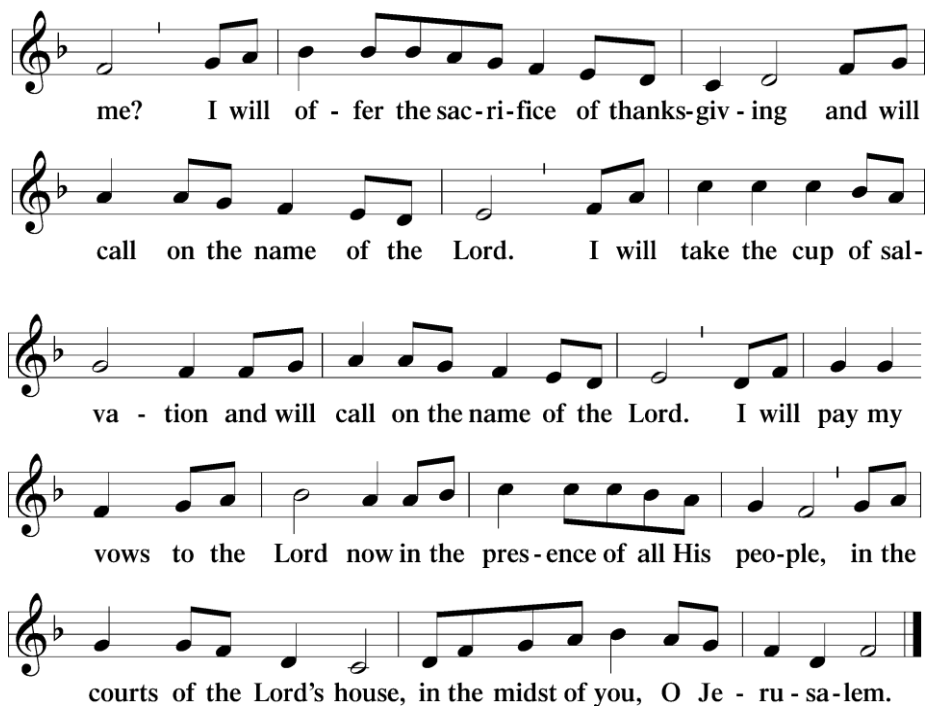
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life ✝ everlasting. Amen.**

OFFERING

Offertory



C What shall I ren-der to the Lord for all His ben-e-fits to



me? I will of - fer the sac-ri-fice of thanks-giv - ing and will
 call on the name of the Lord. I will take the cup of sal-
 va - tion and will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my
 vows to the Lord now in the pres - ence of all His peo-ple, in the
 courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Je - ru - sa-lem.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

- P** On this occasion, when we especially remember our sin and our mortality, let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.
- P** Merciful Father, Your Son was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Give Your baptized children strength to withstand persecution and temptation. Lord, in Your mercy,
- C** **hear our prayer.**
- P** Father, Your Son heard the devil twist the words of Holy Scripture and yet was not deceived. Give us pastors who will preach and teach Your Word

accurately; and give us ears, minds, and hearts to receive that Word for our own defense, endurance, and confession of the true Christian faith; Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Lord God, king of the universe, You have chosen to provide for all people through earthly government and commerce. Give us rulers and business people who conduct all affairs within Your good and gracious law, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way, because this is pleasing in Your sight, and You desire all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Almighty God, there are many who would gladly extinguish Your Gospel and Your people. Bless our enemies and cause them to live with us in peace. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Merciful Father, You know the trials and suffering of Your children. We ask You especially to care for our loved ones, _____. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Father, Your Son gave His living and life-giving body and blood for us to eat and drink that through it, forgiveness of sin, life and salvation would crowd out the death that we have inherited. Give us deep and abiding joy even during this penitential season. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Into Your hands, gracious Father, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

C **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 forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you
and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you
peace.

C Amen.

HYMN “Lord Jesus, Think on Me

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Acknowledgments

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