

Ash Wednesday Liturgy

(Adapted from the Ash Wednesday Liturgy of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 264 of the Episcopal Church, USA)

BRIEF INTRO TO ASH WEDNESDAY + LENT (CHRIS)

What is Lent and how does it form us as we walk with Jesus unto His death? What is Ash Wednesday? Brief introduction to the disciplines of Lent: Fasting, Prayer, Almsgiving, “Keeping Watch” What will we be experimenting with tonight?

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wickedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. **(CHRIS)**

Scripture Readings

Old Testament: Joel 2:12-17 ; Isaiah 58:1-12
Psalm: Psalm 103:8-14
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Joel 2:12-17 (PIERRE)

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?'

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING (CHRIS)

- **Meditative space to journal and pray over what to fast, engaging this question:**
What is my spirit in bondage from in this season of life? followed by, *What is the Spirit desiring to free me from?*

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 58:1-12 (MAXIE)

Shout out, do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practised righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgements,
they delight to draw near to God.
'Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?'
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day,
and oppress all your workers.
Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?
Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER (CHRIS)

- **Meditative space to journal and pray over how to pray in this season, engaging this question:** *How is the Spirit inviting me to fill this fresh space in my life with prayer, created through my fast? How am I to practice dependency with God through a fresh discipline of prayer?*

PSALM READING: Psalm 103:1-14 (CHRIS)

- 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.
- 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.
- 3 He forgives all your sins and heals all your infirmities;
- 4 He redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness;
- 5 He satisfies you with good things, and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
- 6 The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made his ways known to Moses and his works to the children of Israel.
- 8 The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us, nor will he keep his anger for ever.

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us.
13 As a father cares for his children, so does the LORD care for those who fear him.
14 For he himself knows whereof we are made; he remembers that we are but dust.

EPISTLE READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 (PIERRE)

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, labours, 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 honour and dishonour, 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.

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF ALMSGIVING (CHRIS)

- **Meditative space to journal and pray over how to give in this season, engaging this question:** *How can you actively seek to fast from something in this season, and to then financially engage in a project of justice + mercy, putting your resources where your heart truly desires to reside? Engage a friend in this creative work, and tell the story of where God leads you among our community at 3rd Place.*

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 6:1-6,16-21 (MAXIE)

'Beware of practising 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.

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF KEEPING WATCH (CHRIS)

- **Meditative space to journal and pray over how to keep watch in this season, engaging this question:** *Where is the Spirit of God at work in my life, my neighborhood, and our city? How am I invited to participate alongside the ongoing work of God in my city? What tangible things can I help bring to life during this Lenten season?*

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF IMPOSITION OF ASHES (CHRIS)

- **Silence is then kept for a time, all kneeling. People come forward to receive ashes on forehead when they are ready. Quiet, meditative music in background.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

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. **(CHRIS)**

The ashes are imposed with the following words:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. *(SAY TO PERSON RECEIVING ASHES...Pierre, Maxie, and Chris give ashes to people when they come forward to receive them).*

(To transition, Maxie reads:)

PSALM OF CONFESSION: Psalm 51:1-17 (MAXIE)

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.
(SKIP VS 12)
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.

BRIEF EXHORTATION TO CONFESS (CHRIS)

- **Meditative space to journal and pray over what to confess in this season, engaging this question:** *Where is the Spirit of God leading me towards confession this evening? What do I need to release, repent of (turn away from), make right, or pick up afresh in this Lenten season? Simply put, how does my heart need to be made right with God in this time?*

INVITATION TO RECEIVE COMMUNION (PIERRE)

- Quiet, meditative music playing as people come forward to receive body and bread from front. ***Speak to people as they come forward saying, "This is Christ's body, broken for you..this is Christ's blood, shed for the restoration of all things"***

LITANY OF PENITANCE (VARIOUS LEADS, ALL RESPOND)

Most holy and merciful Father:

We confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
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. **(CHRIS)**
Have mercy on us, Lord. (ALL)

We have been deaf 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. **(PIERRE) Have mercy on us, Lord. (ALL)**

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives, **(MAXIE) We confess to you, Lord. (ALL)**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, **(CHRIS) We confess to you, Lord. (ALL)**

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves, **(PIERRE) We confess to you, Lord. (ALL)**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work, **(MAXIE) We confess to you, Lord. (ALL)**

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us, **(CHRIS) We confess to you, Lord. (ALL)**

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, **(PIERRE) Accept our repentance, Lord. (ALL)**

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

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

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;
Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.

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

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection. **(CHRIS) AMEN.**

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