



ASH WEDNESDAY 2021

A SERVICE OF WORD & PRAYER

Grace Episcopal Church

Honesdale, Pennsylvania

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Our thanks to Susan Keller for assisting with this service.

ASH WEDNESDAY

PREPARATION

GREETING and EXHORTATION

Officiant: Bless the Lord † who forgives all our sin.

All: **His mercy endures forever.**

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

It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. 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 repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, 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 make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

Silence is then kept for a time, all kneeling.

Officiant: Almighty and everlasting God,

All: **you hate nothing that you have created
and you forgive the sins of all who ask forgiveness,
Give us new, clean and humble hearts.
Because we are sorry for our sins,
and admit that we can do nothing good without you,
forgive us for the things we know we have done wrong
and wash us completely.**

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.

Refrain

The EPISTLE

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:7a

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.

The Word of God

Thanks be to God.

The HOLY GOSPEL of our Savior Jesus Christ. Glory to you, O Christ.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

✚ 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. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 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, O Christ.

MEDITATION

Father Erb

I received a Message from our former neighbor at the Methodist Church.

Pastor Miguel sent a comic for Ash Wednesday during the pandemic.

The minister in full garb leaning across the Altar, pool stick in hand,
reaches towards a faithful man, six-foot distant.

The tag-line read, "Ashes Cued Up."

I have always preferred Ash Wednesday evening services,

when the day is done and you go to your homes

washing off the charcoal before going to bed.

For Jesus tells his followers,

"When you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that everyone will see that they are fasting."

Isn't it ironic that the tradition of the Church goes against the teaching of Jesus!

Well, enough of that.

What is important is that we do remember before God and our sisters and brothers
that we are as the old Prayer Book used to call us, 'miserable offenders' -
dust,
and to dust we shall return.

A matter of humility.

That has always been a fascinating word to me.

You know, or most of you do, that I spend a lot of time in the woods.

To come upon a large, fallen tree, decaying

into what you would find at Agway in plastic bags - hummus -

what Wiktionary defines as:

A large group of natural organic compounds, found in the soil, formed from the chemical and biological decomposition of plant and animal residues and from the synthetic activity of microorganisms.

or,

compost.

Since Sue had great success with a vegetable garden this pandemic summer,

I may be making our own compost pile.

Should I tell you about growing worms and night-crawlers in a leaf pile

when I was I boy in New Hampshire?

Well, I guess I just did.

I sold them to town folk for their fishing trips.

Back to ashes,

remembering that we constantly need to break down our pride,

confess our sins, humbly before our God,

and make a true repentance and amendment of life.

This is why we join together in our walk with Jesus in the wilderness
for these forty days of Lent.

For true repentance and amendment of life.

As the prophet Micah asks,

“What does the LORD require of you, O Mortal,

but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Maybe if we observe those three things, we will have a blessed Lenten walk:

Let us do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God and each other.

AMEN.

The LITANY of PENITENCE

The Officiant and People together, all kneeling.

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.

The Officiant continues

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, O God.

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.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives,

We confess to you, O God.

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

We confess to you, O God.

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

We confess to you, O God.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

We confess to you, O God.

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

We confess to you, O God.

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, O God.

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, O God.

For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

Accept our repentance, O God.

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.

The Officiant continues.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live, has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and with sincere hearts believe his holy Gospel.

Therefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The LORD'S PRAYER, (traditional, using 'trespasses')

Stand **The PRAYER of THANKSGIVING**

All: **God of the desert, in these forty days of Lent,
as we follow Jesus into the unknown, and for all our lives,
help us to recognize the Tempter when he comes;
let it be your bread of life which we eat,
the world you have created that we serve,
and you only that we worship;
for you are the source of truth, love and goodness. Amen.**

PROPER BLESSING for Ash Wednesday

Officiant: 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. Amen.