

ST. ANDREW'S, BLACKROCK & BRAY - 17TH FEBRUARY 2021

ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTION

Introduction

Every year at Easter,
we celebrate our redemption
through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration
and to practice with discipline daily repentance,
our daily dying and rising in union with Christ.
We begin this season
by acknowledging our need for repentance
and for the mercy and forgiveness
proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Call to Worship - Joel 2:12-13

*'Even now,' declares the Lord,
 'return to me with all your heart,
 with fasting and weeping and mourning.'*

*Rend your heart
 and not your garments.*

*Return to the Lord your God,
 for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
 and he relents from sending calamity.*

Call to Confession

We are invited to observe this season of Lent through self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, reading and meditating on the Word of God, and works of love and witness.

Lent is a journey of deepening reflection and renewal, an opportunity to make new commitments in faith.

We prepare for the journey by setting aside burdens that would weigh us down.

Let us come before God, our Creator and Redeemer, and confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession

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 and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

Have mercy on me, O God,
 according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
 blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
 and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
 and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
 and done what is evil in your sight;
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
 wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Create in me a pure heart, O God,
 and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
 and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Father, thank you for the comfort of the assurance that if we
confess our sins you will forgive us our sins and purify us from all
unrighteousness

Almighty and everlasting God,
you despise nothing you have made
and forgive the sins of all who are repentant.
Give us the grace we need to lament our sins

and acknowledge our brokenness,
that we may receive from you,
the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading - 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

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 favour I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you.'*

I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation.

We put no stumbling-block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonour, bad report and

good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Prayer of Repentance

The journey to Easter begins with ashes.

This ancient symbol speaks of the frailty
and uncertainty of human life,
calls us to heartfelt repentance,
and urges us to place our hope in God alone.

*Almighty God,
you have created us out of the dust of the earth.
May these ashes remind us of our mortality and penitence and
teach us again that only by your gracious gift
are we given everlasting life
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.*

[Silence is kept]

Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ.
(Romans 6:11, NRSV)

*Gracious God,
Out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life,
creating us to serve you and our neighbours.
In this season of repentance,
restore to us the joy of our salvation
and strengthen us to face our mortality,
that we may reach with confidence for your mercy,
in Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and forever. Amen.*

Closing Prayer

Jesus Christ,
we want always to remember
that you love us, died for us, and rose from the dead for us. In the
next weeks, help us to remember,
and help us trust in you more and more.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely;
and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound
and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. Amen.
(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, NRSV)