

# Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

## The Gathering of the People of God

Let us worship God.

Enfold me in your love, dear God,  
**yet pierce my heart with your mercy.**

In the cascading of your compassion,  
**scour away all that offends.**

The truths to which I am blind  
are hidden so deep, so secretly:  
**bring the light of your wisdom  
to the depths of my heart.**

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
**and put a new and steadfast spirit within me.**

*Psalm 51:1, 6, 10*

*An explanation of the day such as the following may be given.*

Sisters and brothers in Christ,  
from the earliest days of the Church,  
Christians have observed with great devotion  
the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection.

It became the custom of the Church to prepare  
by a season of penitence and fasting.  
At first, this season was observed  
by those who were preparing for baptism at Easter  
and by those who, having been excommunicated,  
were to be restored to the communion of the Church.

By keeping these days with care and attention,  
Christians take to heart the call to repentance  
and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel,  
and grow in faith and devotion to our Lord.  
So, by self-examination and repentance,  
by prayer and fasting,  
by self-denial and acts of generosity  
and by reading and meditating on the word of God,  
let us keep a holy Lent.

## OPENING PRAYER

Father,  
by obedience, even to the point of death,  
your Son, our Saviour, has overcome the world.  
Grant us his grace,  
that we may not yield to evil,  
but remain steadfast in doing your good and perfect will;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

## Service of the Word

FIRST READING	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
PSALM	Psalms 51:1-17
SECOND READING	2 Corinthians 5:20b to 6:10
GOSPEL	Matthew 6:1-21

## THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

## Service of Ashing

*The leader takes the ashes from the communion table, and says:*

Blessed are you, God of all creation.  
You are eternal, we are mortal,  
formed from the dust of the earth.  
As we receive these ashes, make them a sign for us  
of repentance and returning to you.  
Breathe into us again the breath of life.  
**Blessed be God for ever.**

Come, receive the sign of ashes.

*The ashes are placed on each person's forehead in the shape of a cross in silence, or with the words:*

Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.  
**Amen.**

## A LITANY OF PENITENCE

Let us pray:

**Most holy and merciful God,  
we confess to you, and to one another,  
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 neighbours as ourselves.  
We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

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 the Holy Spirit.

**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness:  
our pride, our hypocrisy,  
and our failure to be completely honest with ourselves  
or with other people.

**We confess to you, Lord.**

Our preoccupation with our own comforts or possessions,  
and our dishonesty in daily life and work:

**We confess to you, Lord.**

Our exploitation of other people,  
and our envy of those with more talents than ourselves:

**We confess to you, Lord.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship,  
and our failure to share the faith we have:

**We confess to you, Lord.**

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, Lord.**

For all false judgments,  
for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbours,  
and for prejudice and contempt  
toward those who differ from us:

**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

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

**Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Restore us, good Lord.

**Grant us forgiveness and time for amendment of life.**

Strengthen us to overcome temptation.

**And empower us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

**Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

THE PEACE (standing)

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

## **The Service of the Table**

*APBA (green prayer book) p.128 with Preface on p.151*

## **The Sending Forth of the People of God**

Grant, 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.

Go forth in peace to live your Lenten discipline.

**We go in faith and hope. Amen.**

*Taken from Uniting in Worship 2 © The Uniting Church of Australia 2005*

*and*

*A Prayer Book for Australia © 1999 The Anglican Church of Australia Trust Corporation.*