

ASH

WEDNESDAY



LITURGICAL NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

The Season of Lent

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter: forty days of preparation for fifty days of celebration. Lent means waiting: for the cross, the water and the fire. God does not need Lent, but we do. The rhythm of fast and feast taps into some elemental need of ours, where denial creates longings to be satisfied so that we come to deeper appreciation of God's great gifts.

Lent is a time for preparing catechumens (baptismal candidates) for Easter baptism. It has its origins in the fact that preparation of catechumens is a process by which the whole Christian community is renewed. While Sunday is always a festival of the crucified and raised Christ, omission of the Gloria (Glory to God), along with addition of the Trisagion (Holy God, holy and mighty ...) and other Lenten material provided in A Prayer Book for Australia will help set the tone for the Season.

The six Sundays of the season are seen as a unity. The usual liturgical colours for the first five Sundays are violet. The only Sunday with any significant difference is Lent VI - the Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday) when the colour changes to red (but preferably without the Pentecost symbols), and it can be appropriate for red to remain through to Good Friday.

Setting the scene

Early planning is needed. A distinct break in the setting and mood of the liturgy needs to be made from Christmas and the Sundays after Epiphany to Lent. The intention is to create a more intense focus on the principal symbols of God's presence with us. These are: the assembly of Christ's people; the lectern; the Lord's Table; the empty font. This can happen in different ways: by removing clutter, by covering up decorative art etc., by changes in lighting, by the removal of flowers. Different buildings and different communities will demand different treatment. A good rule of thumb might be to remove everything that is not directly needed. The font can be emptied and covered. Covering crosses in Holy Week is a tradition sometimes observed. However, even if several crosses are visible in a church, Lent is a good time to remove them all and bring back only one (uncovered) for Passion Sunday and Holy Week.

Pancakes and ashes

Shrove Tuesday events go hand in hand with Ash Wednesday: feasting before fasting. One without the other leaves something missing. If it is difficult to have two midweek events, perhaps some of the feasting can be transferred to the Last Sunday after Epiphany, with the traditional pancake party held at breakfast or morning tea. On the same day everyone may be invited to bring last year's palm crosses or fronds to be burnt to make the ashes for Ash Wednesday.

How shall we begin Lent? There is work to do well before Ash Wednesday, and these preparations can involve the whole community. Ash Wednesday is the focus: Shrove Tuesday 'events' need to supplement the more important First Day of Lent.

On **the Last Sunday after Epiphany** it is possible to do two helpful things: the first in church, the second extending the Lord's table to the breakfast or morning tea table. Everyone may be asked to bring back last year's palm crosses or fronds and to burn them to make the ashes for Ash Wednesday. This represents a little death; a letting go of the past in order to embrace God's future. The burning of the palms is best done in silence.

A LITURGY FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Blessed be the Lord who forgives all our sins,
whose mercy endures for ever.

The Lord be with you

And also with you

As far as the east is from the west,
so far has God removed our sins from us.

Call to Worship for the Start of Lent

(inspired by Joel 2:12)

Turn away from the calls of worldly success

Repent, and turn back to God.

Turn away from the desire to have what everyone else has

Repent, and turn back to God.

Turn away from greed and the race for power

Repent, and turn back to God.

As we enter Lent, may we turn back to God

**May we seek forgiveness,
may we seek healing,
may we seek wholeness.**

May our hearts be renewed in this time of worship.

~ written by Rev. Mindi, and posted on **Rev-o-lution**. <http://rev-o-lution.org/>

**Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy**

**Holy God, holy and mighty,
holy and immortal,
have mercy on us.**

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made,
and you 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 brokenness,
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, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalm 51 Litany

Have mercy on me O God in your great kindness:
in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences.
Wash away all my guilt:
and cleanse me from my sin.

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

For I acknowledge my faults:
and my sin is always before me.
Against you only have I sinned
and done evil in your sight.

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Create in me a clean heart O God:
and renew a right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence:
do not take your holy spirit from me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Give me the joy of your help again:
and strengthen me with a willing spirit.
O Lord open my lips:
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

— from *Ash Wednesday—A Service for the Beginning of Lent*,
posted on Bosco Peters' *Liturgy* website. <http://liturgy.co.nz/>

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Hymn

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

INTRODUCTION TO IMPOSITION OF THE ASHES

Ash Wednesday invites us to come back to earth.
To wonder at the gift of life,
my life
our life
with the earth, the shared body of our existence.

These ashes were once trees and shrubs,
and places where life was lived to its fullest.
Once they were full of life.
Now they are black and grey.
Dry.
Lifeless.

But mixed with the waters of our baptism make good fertiliser:
it will help the seeds of the gospel take deeper root in us
and bring forth the fruits,
the harvest of justice, peace, and generosity.

These are ashes worth wearing.

May we accept this gift. And be blessed.
And be assured we will be different at the end of this season.
For from the burnt ashes will spring the green shoot of life
and the purple flower of attentiveness to God.

— from *A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday*, on the Rex A.E. Hunt website.



THE RECEIVING OF ASHES

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 silence, or with the words

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

and/or

Repent and believe the gospel.

and/or

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

Each person may answer

Amen

LITANY

Eternal God, maker of heaven and earth,

have mercy on us.

Incarnate Word, redeemer of the world,

have mercy on us.

Abiding Spirit, giver of light and life,

have mercy on us.

For turning away from your presence,
for disobeying your word and commandments,

forgive us, Lord.

For trusting in our own strength instead of yours,
for betraying your trust and the trust of others,

forgive us, Lord.

For resisting your grace and refusing your blessings,
for holding back from proclaiming our faith in you,

forgive us, Lord.

For damaging this earth and exploiting its creatures,
for neglecting and wasting the gifts you have given us,

forgive us, Lord.

For failing to forgive as we have been forgiven.
for judging others and bearing grudges,

forgive us, Lord.

For skimping on our commitments and relationships,
for failing in hospitality,

forgive us, Lord.

For tolerating oppression, injustice, and wrong,
for keeping silent when we should have spoken up,

forgive us, Lord.

For turning away when others have offered us love,
for closing our hearts when others have needed compassion,

forgive us, Lord.

For all we have done unkindly, unjustly and dishonestly,
for our careless speech and hurtful words,

forgive us, Lord.

Most merciful God,

we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do:

we have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;

we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.

Father, forgive us.

**Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.**

(Absolution)

With our hearts turned to God in repentance,
with the knowledge of our sins
laid bare before the cross of Jesus Christ,
in the name of the living God,
your sins are forgiven.
Receive God's mercy,
take hold of your forgiveness,
and, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
walk in the light of Christ. **Amen.**

*If the service is led by a Lay Minister or a Deacon, the following words may be said instead of the
absolution)*

If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous.
He is the perfect offering for our sins, and not for ours only,
but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 2.1-2

THE GREETING OF PEACE

Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross.

We meet in his name and share his peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn

*(If the service is led by a Lay Minister or a Deacon, The Lord's prayer may be said after the hymn,
followed by the dismissal on page 13)*

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All glory and honour are yours
everywhere and always, O God,
for in your kindness and mercy,
your patience and faithfulness,
you are always ready to forgive and not punish.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son,
our saviour and brother, Jesus Christ,
by whose example and strength
we resist all evil, and turn our backs on its lures
of comfort and honour, of power and success,
seeking instead to store up treasure in heaven,
knowing that though we may seem to have nothing,
in purity, knowledge, patience and kindness,
we really possess everything.

(Nathan Nettleton, Laughing Bird Resources)

Therefore with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your great and glorious name,
for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Merciful God, we thank you
for these gifts of your creation,
this bread and wine,
and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit,
we who eat and drink them
may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread;
and when he had given you thanks
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,
'Take, eat. This is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup,
and again giving you thanks
he gave it to his disciples, saying,
'Drink from this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant
shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded:
proclaiming his offering of himself
made once for all upon the cross,
his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming again,
we celebrate, with this bread and this cup,
his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice
for the sins of the whole world.

Renew us by your Holy Spirit,
unite us in the body of your Son,
and bring us with all your people
into the joy of your eternal kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
we worship you, Father,
in songs of never-ending praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are confident to pray,

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
We who are many are one body,

for we all share in the one bread.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ
in remembrance that he died for us,
and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

God of mercy,
may we who have shared in this holy meal
know your forgiveness in our lives,
bring your reconciliation to others,
and be a sign of your wholeness in this broken world

Blessing

Christ our Saviour draw you to himself,
that you may find in him crucified
a sure ground for faith,
a firm support for hope,
and the assurance of sin forgiven
[and the blessing...]

(or as below for a Lay Minister or Deacon)

Our loving Creator does not desire the death of sinners,
but rather that they may turn from their distorted lives and live.
Therefore we implore God to grant us true repentance
that those things which we do this day may be pleasing to God,
that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully,
and that at the last we may come to God's eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

~ written by Jeanyne Slettom, in *A Service of Ashes*.

Posted on **Process and Faith**. <http://processandfaith.org/resources/liturgy/ash-wednesday>

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