

## Family of Four Parishes

Old St. Mary, Our Lady of Divine Providence, SS Peter & Paul, and Three Holy Women

# LENT

prayer • fasting • almsgiving

### The Echo of Ashes

Joyce Rupp

*"Remember you are dust and to dust  
you shall return."*



the large brown bowl  
rests on a purple cloth  
its roundness holding ashes  
freshly burned  
black and ready for wearing.

blackened thumbs  
press the ancient sign  
upon the waiting foreheads.

I hear the message repeated  
until it haunts and hunts me down;  
remember, remember, remember  
you are dust, dust, only dust  
someday only dust will remain.

the echo of the Lent-stained ashes  
speaks the truth of my humanity:  
the humbleness of my beginning,  
the simplicity of my departure.

A few wise words  
echoing through Ash Wednesday  
urge me to deeper things:  
renewed dedication,  
constant compassion,  
and mindful awareness.

I leave marveling  
at how simple and sublime  
is this envelope of the soul,  
which one day returns  
to dust, dust, only dust.

Dear Friends

I am always amazed at how many people come to Ash Wednesday services. Each Lent I wonder what brings them there. Why do they make such an effort to take their lunch hour or to rise earlier than usual or to come to church after a wearying day's work when they might not come to Mass any other weekday of the year?

This year Ash Wednesday will feel different, since many of us remain home to stay healthy during this pandemic. But, the feelings we have to "return" still holds true.

Maybe a sense of hope is kindled in hearts by the possibility of coming back to God, and trying one more to strengthen one's faith. I think It may also be the realization that there is always a part of one's heart that has not yet been given over to God. There are always parts of us that we hold back and that need to be re-joined to God, in whose heart we truly belong.

No matter where you gather in church or in your home. This first day of Lent the scripture reassure us that God is rich in faithful love and waiting to welcome us home. Let us enter this season trusting that God will draw near and keep us in our desire to "return."

*God, I am re-turning to you, Friend of my heart.*

*I am grateful that I belong to you*

*And that you are always ready to welcome me home.*

As we go into the desert, into the quiet, know of my prayers for you. Be courageous!! God, I place my hand in your hand. As I journey though Lent, trust in his guidance.

Love, *Terri*

Terri Balash, Director of Pastoral Care

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## Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

*Keep it simple. Sit in your favorite chair, turn off the TV and prepare to enter this time of prayer.  
Have the packet of ashes enclosed ready.*

We gather as a repentant people, mindful of our sinfulness, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Opening Prayer:

God of all mercy,  
Your forgiveness and love always await us  
As we turn to you to be reconciled.  
Now is the acceptable time,  
As we begin this season of Lent,  
To find our way back to you.  
May our prayer, fasting and almsgiving  
Bring us into closer union with you  
As we turn from sin  
And promise to be faithful to your gospel. Amen.

### First Reading: Joel 2:12-18

Even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with your whole heart,  
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;  
Rend your hearts, not your garments,  
and return to the LORD, your God.  
For gracious and merciful is he,  
slow to anger, rich in kindness,  
and relenting in punishment.  
Perhaps he will again relent  
and leave behind him a blessing,  
Offerings and libations  
for the LORD, your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion!  
proclaim a fast,  
call an assembly;  
Gather the people,  
notify the congregation;  
Assemble the elders,  
gather the children  
and the infants at the breast;  
Let the bridegroom quit his room  
and the bride her chamber.  
Between the porch and the altar  
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep,  
And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people,  
and make not your heritage a reproach,  
with the nations ruling over them!  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
'Where is their God?'"

Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land  
and took pity on his people.

The word of the Lord.                      Thanks be to God

### Responsorial Psalm

**Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;  
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my  
offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

For I acknowledge my offense,  
and my sin is before me always:

"Against you only have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight."

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

A clean heart create for me, O God,  
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Cast me not out from your presence,  
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Give me back the joy of your salvation,  
and a willing spirit sustain in me.

O Lord, open my lips,

and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

### Second Reading: 2Cor 5:20-6:2

Brothers and sisters:

We are ambassadors for Christ,  
as if God were appealing through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.

For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know  
sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God  
in him.

Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive  
the grace of God in vain. For he says:

*In an acceptable time I heard you,  
and on the day of salvation I helped you.*

Behold, now is a very acceptable time;  
behold, now is the day of salvation.

The word of the Lord.                      Thanks be to God

## Gospel:

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others.

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them.

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Reflection:

It's tradition, every Ash Wednesday we hear these sacred scriptures.

This day always reminds me of my grandmother, and her large ceramic bowl. Early in the morning, she would prepare our one meal, a simple tuna noodle salad, with great love. As a family we attended mass, received our ashes, and went our separate ways. We eventually returned home to share this simple meal, and talked about what we would give up. But, my grandma would always encourage us to pray more, and to reach out: help out the elderly neighbor, keep our room clean, offer to do extra chores and talk nicer to each other. All with a smile. No gloomy faces.

My grandma was a breath of fresh air, she never missed a moment to encourage her family to witness God's grace.

That is why I usually feel a sense of freshness when Lent arrives. It's like a window inside me is being opened so the wind can come seeping into the house and clean out the stale air. It is another opportunity to be intent on receiving God's grace.

I envision God's grace as being a generous, energizing movement of total goodness. The Holy Spirit! This stream of love is always available to each one of us. It is free and it is powerful. Grace can change our lives. All that we need do is be open to receiving it and attentive to goodness (Holy Spirit) in our daily lives. This Lent, let us pause each morning when we rise, stretch our arms wide and pray:

**God of love, I open myself to you.  
May I be aware of your powerful goodness,  
Given to me at every moment of this day.  
May all I am and all I do bless others today.**



***Ritual for applying ashes can be found on page 4.***

## **Packet of Ashes**

Please open the packet of ashes, enclosed in this mailing.  
With your thumb/finger trace the sign of the cross on your forehead with these words:

**Turn away from sin, and believe in the gospel .**

Called to reconciliation, we turn to God in prayer as we respond: **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

That marked with ashes, Christians throughout the world will be renewed in our commitment to be God's instrument of conversion and reconciliation, we pray:

**Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

That the word will come to know the mercy of God and respond with acts of charity and justice we pray:

**Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

That those who are entering their final preparation for the baptism and reception into the church be healed and strengthened during these forty days, we pray:

**Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

For what else do we pray today?

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As we seek to restore our relationship with God, we gather all our prayers as we pray: Our Father....

## **An Act of Spiritual Communion**

My Jesus,  
I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

## **Closing Prayer:**

Christ Jesus, through your sacrifice you make possible the work of reconciliation. Through you we have been saved.

As we enter into this sacred time of conversion and penance, let us listen more intently to the voice of God in our lives so that our hearts and minds will truly be changed as we make our way back to you.

For this we pray in your name. Amen.

May God who is rich in mercy bless you now and always, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **HONORING OUR RITUALS:**

Rituals are what have helped me get through this pandemic. What a challenging time, and until my entire family receives their vaccine, we will not be able to gather around my grandma's ceramic bowl. But, I can make and deliver her famous tuna salad. And, I will!

Another ritual during Lent, my grandma wore a simple lace sweater it was her reminder:

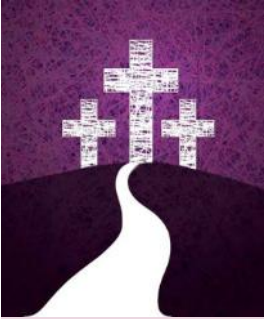
*Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other...Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

*Colossians 3:12-14*

After she passed, I was given her lace sweater, and wear it to feel closer to her and remember: Jesus, transform all I am and all I do into the kind of love that permeated your presence. Clothe me with your love and grant me grace to be truly kind and caring. May my spiritual clothes be spun from the gold of your goodness and last into eternity.

**Honor the traditions in your family. Fill your home this Lent with all you hold dear.**

## Stations of the Cross



Gracious God, as we set out with Jesus, as he begins his passion, open our ears to hear his invitation to take up our own crosses every day and follow him. Give us courage to face the challenges we encounter on the way, free from the paralysis of fear. Strengthened by your grace, may we help each other to our feet. May we be confident that, walking with the Lord, we shall arrive together at the fullness of life and joy, which is our hope and your gift. We ask you this through Christ, your Son and our brother. Amen.

### I. Jesus Is Condemned to Death

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus, at this moment you stand judged and condemned. You take upon yourself all the accusations that human beings hurl against each other. You bear the contempt that has crushed people throughout the centuries. Give us the courage to be close to those who are condemned and rejected by the world, whether they be innocent or guilty. Now you set off toward your crucifixion. Give us confidence in your love, which is stronger than death and will have the victory. Amen.



### II. Jesus Receives the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



Jesus, now you take upon yourself the burden of the cross and all that weighs us down. Give us the strength to walk onward, uncrushed by whatever is placed on our shoulders. May we help others, to endure in the trials and sufferings of their lives, with joy and undefeated. Amen.

### III. Jesus Falls for the First Time

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus, when we fall and feel discouraged, may we know that you are especially close to us, bearing our shame and giving us the strength to stand up on our feet and begin to walk again. Make our hearts tender toward all those whose falls bring upon them the righteous resentment of others. May the desire for holiness continue to burn with us. Amen.



#### IV. Jesus Is Met by His Blessed Mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



“As a mother comforts her child,  
so I will comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.” (Isa 66:13)

Jesus, be close to all who lose or become distant from the people they love, especially parents mourning their children. If we are separated from them by death, (or pandemic) may we trust in the ultimate victory of God’s love, which will gather us together once more. If it is through alienations or misunderstanding, then may we be confident that one day God’s grace will cast down every barrier, and we shall be at home with each other in you. Amen.

#### V. Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus, may I be unashamed to accept help when I need it, and may I be eager to offer it when others have needs. May our mutual dependence be a source of joy and an occasion of grace, knitting us together in the community of love. Amen.



#### VI. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



Jesus, may I see your compassion and smile with your radiance, so that your unfailing tenderness is made flesh and blood in me. May I always be alert to those who feel invisible and despised, recognizing that they are your brothers and sisters, sharing your dignity, however much this is concealed by the bruises of this life. Amen.

#### VII. Jesus Falls for the Second Time

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus, lift me to my feet when I feel I can not go any further. When I feel battered by the storms of life, with neither the energy of strength to carry on, then may I know that you, the strong Son of God, will bear me onward until I arrive at home in God. Amen.



### VIII. The Women of Jerusalem

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. Jesus, give me a heart of flesh so I may rejoice with those who rejoice and sorrow with those who are saddened. Peel off the shell of selfishness that holds others at bay, so I may be one with them in their lives, free to act with your own spontaneous generosity. Amen.



### IX. Jesus Falls for the Third Time

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

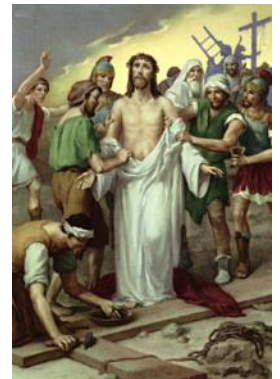


Jesus, after so many falls, let me not lose hope for happiness and holiness. If you are with me, then I am not doomed to be stuck in the endless repetition of my failures. May your grace bud in the wilderness of my heart. Grant a fresh beginning even today.

### X. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus, I fear to be seen as I am, with my foolish fears and hidden failures. I would be ashamed and wish to hide, like Adam and Eve. But for us you have been stripped naked and borne the jeers of the world. Comfort those who feel despised. May I know that



### XI. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



Jesus, your life had seemed so full of promise, and yet it ended in the disgrace of the cross. Embrace all those who seem to be utter failures. And as you are close to us these dark moments, so may we share with you in the radiance of your resurrection. Amen.

## XII. Jesus Dies on the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46)

Jesus, be with us at the hour of our death. May those who feel abandoned by God know that he is closer than we can imagine. May those who feel that there is no God at all discover his intimate presence. Amen.

## XIII. Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus, now you are lowered from the cross into the hands of those who loved you and who stayed by your side to the end. May we have the courage to remain faithful to you when it is costly. Grant us to be faithful to all those whom we love, even when we receive nothing in return. Amen.



## XIV. Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



Jesus, now you are laid to rest in the tomb. May we rest in your love, confident that even when the future is obscure, we nestle in your Father's care. Grant us patient endurance until we hear your final summons to the fullness of life. Amen.

## Conclusion

Gracious God, now we have arrived at the end of our journey to the resting place of Jesus. We have been with him as he endured opposition, mockery, failure, suffering and death. He has thus embraced every upset and defeat that we may face in our pilgrimage through life. Grant us, more generous God, that walking in the way of Jesus, we may attain that joy and freedom to which you call us. We ask you this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

