

## GOSPEL LESSON—Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

We are tied to the historic church with these lessons. Jesus taught the people of His day. In Matthew 6 Jesus warned them about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees and the Sadducee presented themselves as virtuous. Jesus looked through their hypocrisy and pointed to their heart. As Joel told us to rend our hearts and not our clothes, Jesus told us to do our acts of penance in private. I have always considered this to be an act of maturity that few of us ever attain. Only Jesus never complained about His circumstances. We whine and moan and complain, and tell everyone (with great pride,) what we have given up for Lent.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

¶ Lord God, heavenly Father, You are the Light of our life and the assurance of our salvation. With You as our God we have nothing to fear. You protect us from our enemies and are the source of all our joy and happiness. Accept the grateful melodies of our hearts, and listen to the songs of our praise.

Forgive us, O Lord, for the times we have murmured against You and have been discontented with our life. In the midst of abundance we have often been critical of Your providence. Walking through the wilderness of this world, we have often failed to look up to Him whom You raised for our salvation. We have often looked elsewhere than to Your grace and mercy to find a cure for our ills. Having a knowledge of Your truth, we have often permitted ourselves to be misled by the deceit and cunning of men. For these and many other transgressions, forgive us, O Lord.

Grant us power through Your Holy Spirit to trust in the merits of Jesus Christ, our Savior, rather than in our own attempted goodness. Help us to accept Your Love in Your Only-Begotten Son. Enable us to hold high the banner of Your Love in Christ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. As You led us in Your Son, help us to lead the world out of darkness into Your marvelous light.

Grant that our nation may increase in obedience to Your Law and Gospel. Help us to be better examples to the world in which we live. According to Your will, heal the sick, strengthen the faith of all doubters, and lift up the depressed. Break the solitude of the lonely with Your presence.

Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. (**Time of silent prayer.**)

Bless the witness of Your Church that we may lead the world to know the goodness of Your law and accept the truth of Your Gospel. In Your Son's glorified name we pray.

© Amen.

## ASH WEDNESDAY

### Chant Tone



### Introit

The sacrifices of God are a broken — spirit,\*  
a broken and contrite heart, O God,  
You will | not despise.

Have mercy upon | me, O God;\*  
according | to Your love;  
according to Your abundant — mercy\*  
blot out my trans — gressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my in | iquity,\*  
and cleanse me | from my sin.

Create in me a clean heart, — O God,\*  
and renew a right spirit with — in me.

Cast me not away from Your — presence,\*  
and take not Your Holy Spirit  
— from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your sal — vation,\*  
and uphold me with a willing — spirit.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\*  
and to the Holy — Spirit;  
as it was in the be — ginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. — Amen.

The sacrifices of God are a broken — spirit,\*  
a broken and contrite heart, O God,  
You will | not despise.

(Antiphon, Psalm 51:17;  
Psalm 51:1-3, 10-12)

### Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

### Gradual

[O come, let us fix our eyes on] — Jesus,\*  
the founder and perfecter | of our faith,  
Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despis | ing the shame,\*  
and is seated at the right hand of the | throne of God.

(Hebrews 12:2)

### Verse

Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and | merciful,\*  
slow to anger, and abounding in | steadfast love.

(Joel 2:13b)

**ENTRANCE PRAYER:** O God, our Eternal Father, we thank You for permitting us to begin another Season of Lent. We are again privileged to meditate on the cross of Christ and its meaning for us. In spirit we appear before You in sack cloth and ashes. Help us withstand the temptations of life that would keep us from worshiping You. Keep us from everything that would harm us in body and soul. Grant us a full measure of Your Holy Spirit that we may bring the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to everyone in our community. All this we ask through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

**ASH WEDNESDAY IS THE DAY WE HAVE CHOSEN TO BEGIN THE SEASON OF LENT.** Over the years the church set the number of days of Lent at forty. Since Sunday is always a Feast Day, it was excluded from the count. If you sit down with a calendar you will count forty-six days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, because there are six Sundays. The number forty is used because of its basis in Scripture. Jesus was in the wilderness forty days, the chosen people were in the wilderness forty years, it rained forty days and forty nights while Noah was in the Ark. The church decided over time to observe the forty days of fasting. Some people give up something for Lent. The best thing to give up for Lent is your sin. God is always working for us. He made it possible to live without our sin because of the wonder and the work of Jesus Christ. Go with God.

#### THEME OF THE DAY:

Give Up Your Sin

**WORSHIP NOTES:** Thomas Talley, an expert on the history of the liturgical year, says that the first liturgy for Ash Wednesday that includes ashes is in Germany in 960. As early as the sixth century, the Spanish Mozarabic rite calls for forehead ashes when dealing with a gravely ill person. At the beginning of the 11th century, Abbot Aelfric notes that it was customary for everyone to take part in a ceremony on the Wednesday before Lent that included ashes. Only later did this day come to be called Ash Wednesday. Our Propers for Ash Wednesday date from at least 960.

**INTROIT**—(Antiphon: Psalm 51:17;) Psalm 51:1-3, 10-12  
Psalm 91 was written by David on account of his sin with Bathsheba. We use it (especially today) to remind ourselves of the volume of our sin and the great distress our sin causes in our relationship with God.

#### COLLECT

Since Ash Wednesday is a new beginning (the beginning of Lent) we go all the way back to our creation (with memories of Adam and Eve) to ask God to Love what He created, (by which we mean humans.) Then we remind Him that there is remission of sins given to us by the work and person of Christ. Then we asked to be made aware of our sinfulness that we are ever a part of the forgiveness.

#### OLD TESTAMENT LESSON—Joel 2:12-19

We especially use this lesson today, because it includes the exhortation to: "return to the Lord with fasting." The Prophet Joel moved on to list the accoutrements of proper fasting. It is a rending of the hearts rather than the some form of clothing. This accords with Jesus' word in the Gospel.

#### GRADUAL—Hebrews 12:2

Hebrews chapter 12 compares the greater wonder of Heaven to our place here on Earth. We don't always consider what Jesus gave up to take on human flesh and live on Earth. Plus then to accomplish our salvation, He was shamed with a death of hanging from a cross. All of that work was done because God wanted you to be eternally in Heaven!

#### EPISTLE LESSON—2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

At the end of chapter five (5:20b,) Paul was pushing one word on the people: "reconciliation." Then, (in chapter 6,) as a second thought we not only hear the message of the reconciliation effected by Jesus in our flesh, we also learn the way to put that reconciliation into practice, (mainly by giving up our flagrant sin.) By way of that reconciliation to God through Christ, we are able to endure many things. The most productive thing we could "give up," for Lent would be sin; pick a Commandment, identify the way that you violate that Commandment, for the 40 days of Lent, intentionally stop that sin.

#### VERSE—Joel 2:13b

We do not sing Alleluias during Lent. Therefore, from the time of our 1941 Hymnal we proscribed the use of Joel 2:13 to be used instead. However, Joel is historically only used on Ash Wednesday. For Lent we will print the historic verse with comment. Joel 2:13 reminds us that God, through the work and person of Jesus, always invites us to repent and return to Him.