

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ASH WEDNESDAY 2021

Today's service of Ash Wednesday liturgy from Trinity Lime Rock will include prayers, a reading and a short homily. We're so glad you are joining us today.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and 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 wretchedness, 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, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah 58:1-9a

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

"Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Ash Wednesday Homily

Last year at this time we were just beginning to be concerned about the new novel coronavirus. We had no idea what was coming down the pike. When we first closed the church for in-person services I think many of us thought that this would be a very temporary situation and that it would all be over by summer. Well, I mistakenly thought that. I've always been told that I'm overly optimistic. I'll admit it!

And now we find ourselves, a year later still unable to come back to church together in person...even as we have really been lifted up and inspired by our online worship.

The normal things that I have preached about on Ash Wednesdays of the past don't really make sense this year.

What should we give up for Lent? We've given up so much already. It's like we've had a whole year of Lent.

What should we take on for Lent? We've already taken on a lot; learning new technologies, new skills and maybe new activities or hobbies. And many of us have taken on cleaning projects, painting and building projects. We've taken on a lot in the last year.

But despite all that, this Ash Wednesday can be a time of renewed hearts in an honest reflection of our faults and our humanity. We still need to recall and re-commit ourselves too on this Ash Wednesday. No matter what we have been through in 2020 Jesus calls us to a commitment to self-examination as a way of clearing out some of our old behaviors, our old blind spots and our old thinking. God says through Isaiah, "you say you want to seek me and know my ways, but really, you are just going through the motions." It's a pretty harsh judgement that Isaiah delivers in God's name.

God knows all the ways in which we try to fool ourselves into thinking we're above this-and-such, or that problem over there has nothing to do with us.

Ash Wednesday is a day of penitence and fasting...if it is safe for you to do so. It's a day when we prepare ourselves for five weeks of honest reflection about our lives. And so, traditionally we have ashes as a visible reminder of our mortality.

I have prepared the ashes in my usual way: I burned the palms from last Palm Sunday and have ground and sifted them for today. They are available on a table outside the Parish Hall doors if you wish to drive over and pick up one of the small bags you'll see there.

But although it has been a tradition to make the sign of the cross in ashes on our foreheads, we are given the instruction in our Prayer Book that ashes are optional. And indeed, the early Church, before the 12th century did not impose ashes at all. Do you know what isn't optional this Ash Wednesday? A willingness on our part to make a new start of things for Lent, to let

God break us open so that we can see God's truth and choose a Lent of humility, honesty and compassion for others.

Litany of Penitence

Book of Common Prayer pg. 267

Most holy and merciful Father:

We confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
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.

The Celebrant continues

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors 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 your Holy Spirit.
Have mercy on us, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives,
We confess to you, Lord.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,
We confess to you, Lord.

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,
We confess to you, Lord.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,
We confess to you, Lord.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,
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 neighbors, and for our 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, and let your anger depart from us;

Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,

That we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

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

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live, has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, GOD's absolution and remission of their sins. He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and with sincere hearts believe his holy Gospel.

Therefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Peace of the Lord be always with you. And also with you.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.