

## THE LITURGY OF ASH WEDNESDAY

Grace, mercy and peace  
from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with you  
**and also with you.**

### ACF 123 – Turn our hearts

*Chorus*

*Turn our hearts,  
turn our hearts.*

1. Turn our hearts to one another,  
let Your kindness show:  
where our words or deeds have wounded,  
let forgiveness flow.

*Turn our hearts,  
turn our hearts.*

2. Turn our hearts from pride and anger  
to Your ways of peace,  
for You died and shed Your blood that  
enmity may cease.

*Turn our hearts,  
turn our hearts.*

3. Turn the hearts of generations  
that we may be one:  
make us partners in the kingdom  
till your work is done.

*Turn our hearts,  
turn our hearts.*

4. As we all have been forgiven,  
so we must forgive;  
as we all have found acceptance,  
so let us receive.

Turn our hearts,  
change our hearts,  
join our hearts,  
turn our hearts.

CCLI Song # 1595238  
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Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully.

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
our lives are laid open before you:  
rescue us from the chaos of sin and  
through the death of your Son bring us  
healing and make us whole in Jesus  
Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

### **THE READING**

The reading is taken from Joel 2:1-2.12-17

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God  
**Our hearts and our minds are open**

Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sound the alarm on my holy hill.

Let all who live in the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming.  
It is close at hand—  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and blackness.  
Like dawn spreading across the mountains  
a large and mighty army comes,  
such as never was in ancient times  
nor ever will be in ages to come.

“Even now,” declares the Lord,  
“return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

Rend your heart  
and not your garments.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
for he is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and abounding in love,  
and he relents from sending calamity.  
Who knows? He may turn and relent  
and leave behind a blessing—  
grain offerings and drink offerings

for the Lord your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion,  
declare a holy fast,  
call a sacred assembly.  
Gather the people,  
consecrate the assembly;  
bring together the elders,  
gather the children,  
those nursing at the breast.  
Let the bridegroom leave his room  
and the bride her chamber.  
Let the priests, who minister before the Lord,  
weep between the portico and the altar.  
Let them say, "Spare your people, Lord.  
Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn,  
a byword among the nations.  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
'Where is their God?'"

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **HOMILY**

*Let me tell you about Ash Wednesday 2020.  
This day actually fell on my birthday.  
It was also the day on which I boarded a plane to London  
to have a lovely little birthday dinner with my parents-in-law.*

*But this was not the main reason for my travels:  
early the next day, on the Thursday, I headed for the train station  
and soon arrived at Church House in central London,  
the headquarters of the Church of England.  
I was there for a day full of interviews  
with the staff of the diocese in Europe and our two bishops.  
It turned out to be an exciting, yet very nerve-wracking day -  
a big step on my journey of working out,  
if the path towards training for the priesthood might be the right one for me.  
Upon arrival, I was asked to join the other candidates and the diocesan staff  
at the first-floor chapel of Church House  
(which, believe me, is impossible to find in the maze of corridors  
without asking for directions at least two or three times!).  
On that morning, Bishop Robert led a belated Ash Wednesday service  
and I headed into the interviews with a cross of ash on my forehead.  
Besides myself, there were a handful of other, more or less nervous candidates  
being grilled by the bishops and other members of staff.  
Imagine a slightly tamer and far less glamorous version of the TV show *The Apprentice* .*

*There we were - the very important people,  
like the bishops, the director of ordinands, vocation advisers,  
and on the other side the candidates like little me -  
all wearing the sign of mortality on our foreheads.*

*What seemed slightly bizarre and awkward then,  
carries much meaning now upon reflecting on it:  
Despite the very different roles we inhabit,  
we all "are dust, and to dust we shall return".  
Alongside titles that distinguish us,  
we all carry things we're not proud of.  
On Ash Wednesday, the influential ones are reminded  
that they are no better than anyone else.  
Those trying to discern their place in serving God and the world realise  
that all they have to offer is their flawed selves.*

*It was a winding road that brought me to that particular experience last year.  
Much paperwork, logistics, prayer, advice-seeking, thinking and reading had been done  
in the months and years leading up to entering  
the maze of corridors at Church House that morning.  
On Ash Wednesday we pause and consider the paths that we have walked.  
We become aware of the scars, failure, baggage and deficiency  
we have accumulated on the road to this point.  
By facing this heavy reality head-on  
we are invited into great hope and freedom.  
Christ is here within and around us,  
pausing alongside us, holding us  
as we take stock of our lives.  
We unload our burdens and are filled with the assurance  
that his mercy is sufficient.  
We step into lent, preparing for Easter  
by receiving Christ into our mediocre lives.*

*As I travelled home from London last year  
I had no idea what lent 2020 would have in store for me.  
A few days into lent I received the results from my interview day,  
which sounded a bit disappointing, to be honest,  
and, shortly after that, the first lockdown turned my life upside down.  
Lent 2020 really did try very hard to convince me  
of what Ash Wednesday had already tried to teach me:  
there is so few I myself have control over,  
yet, in the end, God's mercy and grace will see me through.*

*As I reflected on the theme of Ash Wednesday this past week,  
I started to make more sense of my journey to London last year.  
Heading into spring,  
lent invites us to examine the soil of our own ordinary lives.  
May you too, during the next few weeks,*

*find hidden seeds of hope in your own past.  
May you re-discover events in which you encountered God,  
even though you didn't notice back then.  
May we all find the freedom and liberation of the ash crosses on our foreheads -  
the freedom that grows from making peace with our own mortality  
and the liberation which flowers from leaning into Christ's grace and mercy in our lives.  
Amen.*

### **Sof 475 – Purify my heart**

1. Purify my heart,  
let me be as gold  
and precious silver.  
Purify my heart,  
let me be as gold,  
pure gold.

#### *Chorus*

Refiner's fire,  
my heart's one desire  
is to be  
holy,  
set apart for You Lord.  
I choose to be  
holy  
set apart for You my master,  
ready to do Your will.

2. Purify my heart,  
cleanse me from within  
and make me holy.  
Purify my heart,  
cleanse me from my sin,  
deep within.

#### *Chorus*

Refiner's fire,  
my heart's one desire  
is to be  
holy,  
set apart for You Lord.  
I choose to be  
holy  
set apart for You my master,  
ready to do Your will.

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father,  
**have mercy on us.**  
God the Son,  
**have mercy on us.**  
God the Holy Spirit,  
**have mercy on us.**  
Trinity of love,  
**have mercy on us.**

Most merciful God,  
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
We confess that we have sinned in  
Thought, word and deed.  
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.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

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.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

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

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and  
our exploitation of other people.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Our anger at our own frustration  
and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts  
and our dishonesty in daily life and work.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship  
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.

**Lord, have mercy.**

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 towards our neighbours  
and for our prejudice and contempt  
towards 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.

**Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,  
**that we may show 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**

*Silence is kept.*

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
In your mercy forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are, and direct what  
we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy,  
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

## **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

Dear friends in Christ,  
I invite you to receive these ashes  
as a sign of the spirit of penitence with  
which we shall keep this season of Lent.  
God our Father,  
you create us from the dust of the earth:  
grant that these ashes may be for us

a sign of our penitence  
and a symbol of our mortality; for it is by  
your grace alone  
that we receive eternal life  
in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**Amen.**

### **Taizé 1 – Within our darkest night**

Within our darkest night,  
You kindle the fire that never dies away,  
that never dies away.  
Within our darkest night,  
You kindle the fire that never dies away,  
that never dies away.

Jacques Berthier  
© Ateliers et presses de Taizé

The Lord enrich us with his grace,  
and nourish us with his blessing;  
the Lord defend us in trouble  
and keep us from all evil;  
the Lord accept our prayers,  
and absolve us from our offences,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen.**

### **THE PEACE**

Since we are justified by faith,  
we have peace with God  
through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has give us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**and also with you.**

### **INTERCESSIONS**

God of love  
hear the cry of those who yearn for love;  
fractured families, broken homes  
neglected, unwanted, alone.

God of love

**ALL: hear our prayer**

God of justice  
hear the cry of those who yearn for justice;  
persecuted and oppressed,  
exploited, ill-treated, broken.

God of justice

**ALL: hear our prayer**

God of peace

hear the cry of those who yearn for peace;  
in battle zones and broken states,  
frightened, fearful, anxious

God of peace

**ALL: hear our prayer**

God of healing

hear the cry of those who yearn for healing;  
physical and spiritual  
hurting, weakened, depressed

God of healing

**ALL: hear our prayer**

God of mercy

Hear the cry of those who yearn for mercy;  
convicted, in need of your Grace,  
contrite, humble, bowed down,

God of mercy

**ALL: hear our prayer**

May you know

The peace of God

The love of God

The justice of God

The healing and mercy of God

This day and all days

**Amen**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

### **ACF 7 – BEAUTY FOR BROKENNESS**

1. Beauty for brokenness,  
hope for despair,  
Lord, in the suffering,  
this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children,  
Justice, joy, peace,  
sunrise to sunset  
your kingdom increase.

2. Shelter for fragile lives,  
cures for their ills,  
work for the craftsmen,  
trade for their skills;  
land for the dispossessed,  
rights for the weak;  
voices to plead the cause

of those who can't speak.

*Chorus*

God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray;  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain.  
Come change our love from a spark  
to a flame

3. Refuge from cruel wars,  
havens from fear,  
cities for sanctuary,  
freedoms to share,  
peace to the killing-fields,  
scorched earth to green;  
Christ for the bitterness,  
his cross for the pain.

4. Rest for the ravaged earth,  
oceans and streams,  
plundered and poisoned,  
our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness,  
carelessness, greed;  
make us content with  
the things that we need.

*Chorus*

God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray;  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain.  
Come change our love from a spark  
to a flame

5. Lighten our darkness,  
breathe on this flame  
until Your justice  
burns brightly again;  
until the nations  
learn of Your ways,  
seek Your salvation  
and bring You their praise.

*Chorus*

God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray;  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain.  
Come change our love from a spark  
to a flame

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**BLESSING AND DISMISSAL**

May the Holy Spirit  
who leads us into all truth,  
Speak to you words of pardon and peace.

Go in the peace of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

*People depart in silence.*