

THE LITURGY OF THE ASHES



ACT OF PENITENCE

The priest says these or similar words

Sisters and brothers in Christ, from the earliest days of the Church, Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection. It became the custom of the church to prepare for this by a season of penitence and fasting.

At first this season was observed by those who were preparing for baptism at Easter and by those who, having been excommunicated, were to be restored to the communion of the church. By keeping these days with care and attention Christians might take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and grow in faith and devotion to our Lord.

So, by self-examination and repentance, by prayer and fasting, by self-denial and acts of generosity and by reading and meditating on the word of God, let us keep a holy Lent

Silence is kept.

THE RECEIVING OF ASHES

The ashes are placed on the Lord's Table, and the priest says

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***

THE 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.

Eternal God, maker of heaven and earth,

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.**

The priest pronounces the 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.**

THE GREETING OF PEACE

All stand. The Greeting is introduced with these or other appropriate words

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.

All may exchange a greeting of peace. A hymn may be sung.