

Ash Wednesday
6:00pm, February 14, 2024

Welcome

Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Lord's Prayer

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

One: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, you are our God, and we are creatures of your hand. You made us from the dust of the earth, breathed into us your life, and set us in your world to love and serve you. We rejected your love and ignored your wisdom, but you did not reject us. You loved us still, and called us to turn again to you in obedience and in love. You sent Jesus among us to set us free from our own troubles and evils. He lived as one of us, breaking bread with his friends and sharing in their human joys and sorrows. We ask that you send your Spirit upon these gifts. May they nourish us and be a blessing to us.

All: God, as you shared your love with us, Christ shared bread with his friends, and it was in that bread that Christ was known to his disciples. Be known to us O God. Comfort us, mend us, restore us, nourish us, and sustain us for the journey ahead. And make us bold to pray as Jesus taught:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Sharing the Meal

As you share the bread, please remind each other: This is Christ's body, given for you.

Scripture

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

"Be careful that you don't practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

"Whenever you give to the poor, don't blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

"When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

"And when you fast, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They distort their faces so people will know they are fasting. I assure you that they have their reward. When you fast, brush your hair and wash your face. Then you won't look like you are fasting to people, but only to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

One: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

Using the circle method (a practice where all are invited to participate and all voices are equally important), folks will take turns talking. One person should volunteer to begin and then go around the table. You can pass if you'd like or share if you'd like. Start with the first question and work your way through the others as your table feels called. Engage in active listening and being present with one another during this sacred time.

- What is one of your favorite spiritual practices?
- Jesus recommends humility in the part of Matthew we read today. (Don't act to be "seen by others." Don't seek recognition.) Ashes can be seen as a sign of humility, too, as we remember we are, and will return to, the dust. **What is the value of humility?**
- The words "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" are also a call to action. Time is precious; let's use it wisely. **What is something you feel it's urgent to do or address?**
- On this Valentine's Day (or any day!), we might say *From LOVE you have come, and to LOVE you will return.* **How does that strike you?**

Invitation to Lenten Discipline

[by Shawna Bowman, adapted]

.. As we embark on this Lenten journey, let's tell the truth about ourselves:

Some of us have more than we need . . .

Some of us are overwhelmed . . .

Some of us have nothing left to give and nothing left to give up . . .

Some of us are lost . . .

Some of us are found . . .

When we look into one another's eyes and paint one another's faces with ashes, we will remember that we are both fragile and resilient, we are living and we are dying, and in life and in death, we all, no matter who we are, belong to God. Amen.

Imposition of Ashes

If you wish to receive ashes, please do so as we sing.

Hymn Jesus Remember Me

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Blessing the Cup

Hymn 518 Let Us Break Bread Together

***Let us break bread together on our knees, Let us break bread together on our knees,
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.***

***Let us drink wine together on our knees, Let us drink wine together on our knees,
When I fall ...***

***Let us praise God together on our knees, Let us praise God together on our knees,
When I fall ...***

Benediction

The Peace

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.