

Ash Wednesday

A Rite for the
Beginning of Lent

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Notes

Lent is the season in the Church year during which all those who are baptised prepare to celebrate the Paschal mystery – the Passion – the suffering, death and Resurrection of Christ. In order that this Paschal mystery should be realised in the lives of Christians, Lent is a time of self-examination and self-discipline accompanied by individual and communal acts of devotion. Penitence forms a part of Lenten discipline in a context where we recall the events of our redemption and seek spiritual growth so that our baptism may be fully realised in our lives.

The Church therefore marks the beginning of Lent with a liturgy that brings into focus the themes and intentions of the season. Ash was a symbol of grief and mourning in many ancient cultures and had become a sign of repentance before the dawn of Christianity. The cross marked on the forehead was likewise an ancient symbol of salvation (known as such in the Psalms of Solomon and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and originating in the exegesis of Ezekiel 9). The sign of the cross acquired its full significance when the cross became the instrument of our Lord's death.

The rite of imposition of ashes traditionally forms part of the Ash Wednesday Eucharist. In some congregations this may not be possible, in which case it can be included in the liturgy for the Sunday before Lent or for the first Sunday of Lent, or on any of the intervening days. In congregations in which there is no celebration of the Eucharist during this period, this rite can be incorporated into *A Service of the Word*. If used on a Sunday, the Collect and readings of that Sunday should be used; if on a weekday, those for Ash Wednesday should be used.

The Position of the Rite

Scottish Liturgy 1982

Sections 2 to 7 are omitted. The rite is celebrated after the Sermon, replacing sections 13 to 15. The Liturgy resumes with the Peace at section 16. The Address may be used after the Greeting at section 1, or instead of a Sermon at section 12.

A Service of the Word 2015

The Address may be used at 2.2 or instead of a Sermon at 7. Sections 2.3 to 4 are omitted. The rite replaces section 9, and 10.1, the main liturgy resuming with 'Lord have mercy' and the Lord's prayer at 10.2. A hymn of penitential character should be used at section 13, and not Gloria in Excelsis or Te Deum.

Parts marked † are optional.

A Rite for the Beginning of Lent

Address

Dear friends in Christ, as we begin the season of Lent we are reminded that, in our Christian lives, we seek to realise the death of Jesus so that God may be glorified in our worship and through our witness in the world.

Saint Paul writes of 'carrying around the death of Jesus in our bodies, so that the life of Jesus may be clearly shown in our bodies' (2 Cor 4. 10).

It is through baptism that we die into Christ's death (Rom 6. 3-4) so that we may share in his resurrection. In beginning our Lenten observance, we are therefore reminded of our baptism, and how Christ's death on the cross may clearly be shown in our lives.

We now come before God in penitence, reflecting on our life in Christ. We pledge ourselves to observe this season of self-examination, discipline, and self-denial with sincerity, prayer, and reverent reflection on holy Scripture, seeking God's purpose for us, and modelling our lives on the example of Christ Jesus.

The Litany†

God the Father,
have mercy on us.

God the Son,
have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit,
have mercy on us.

Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity,
have mercy on us.

From all evil and mischief:
from pride, vanity, and hypocrisy:
from envy, hatred, and malice:
and from all evil intent.
good Lord, deliver us.

From sloth, worldliness, and love of money:
from hardness of heart
and contempt for your word and your laws,
good Lord, deliver us.

From sins of body and mind:
from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil;
from error and false doctrine,
good Lord, deliver us.

In all times of sorrow,
in all times of joy:
in the hour of death,
and at the day of judgement,
good Lord, deliver us.

Govern and direct your holy Church: fill it with love and truth:
and grant it that unity which is your will.
Hear us, good Lord.

Give us boldness to preach the gospel in all the world, and to make disciples of all the nations.

Hear us, good Lord.

Enlighten your ministers with knowledge and understanding, that by their teaching and their lives they may proclaim your word.

Hear us, good Lord.

Give your people grace to hear and receive your word, and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Hear us, good Lord.

Bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived.

Hear us, good Lord.

Strengthen those who stand:
comfort and help the faint-hearted:
raise up the fallen;
and finally beat down Satan under our feet.

Hear us, good Lord.

Give us true repentance:
forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance
and our deliberate sins:
and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit
to amend our lives according to your holy word.

Holy God

Holy Strong

Holy Immortal

Have mercy on us.

Silence

Act of Penitence

Create in us clean hearts, O God:
and renew a right spirit within us.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Silence

Either

**A. Almighty God,
Creator of heaven and earth,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word, and deed.**

**We have not loved you with all our being,
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves:
we have disfigured your image in which we are made.**

**In your mercy, forgive what we have been
and what we have done,
guide us and help us to amend our lives,
and bring us to fullness of life in you,
for the sake of your Son who died for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Or

B. Creator of heaven and earth,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word, and deed.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

We have not loved you with all our being,
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves:
we have disfigured your image in which we are made.

Amen. Christ, have mercy.

In your mercy, forgive what we have been
and what we have done,
guide us and help us to amend our lives,
and bring us to fullness of life in you.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Silence

Imposition of Ashes

Almighty God,
you have compassion on all your children,
and hate nothing you have made;
you do not desire the death of sinners,
but that they turn from their ways and live.

May these ashes be for us,
who are redeemed through the cross of Christ,
a sign of our death to sin,
and the pledge of our life in Christ;
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

I invite you to receive the mark of Christ's cross,
with which we are signed at Baptism,
and by which we are forgiven our sins
and live to the glory of God.

*The imposition of ashes may be received standing or kneeling,
at the Font or before the Holy Table.*

*The imposition may be done in silence,
or the following words can be used.*

You are redeemed by the Cross of Christ.

or

(Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.†)
Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

Silence

Prayer

Lord God Almighty,
your people are washed clean in the saving flood of baptism,
and born again:

As we follow the way of the cross,
we ask you to unseal for us the wellspring of your grace,
cleanse our hearts of all that is not holy,
and cause your gift of new life to flourish in us;
grant this through Jesus Christ your Son,
who sets us free from sin,
and lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
holy and mighty God, world without end.

Amen.

