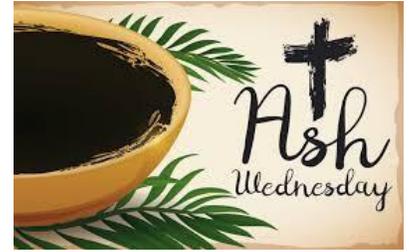


Lent Daily Devotions

Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021



- **Readings**

- Joel 2:12-18 *Return to me with all your hearts.*
- Psalm 51 *Have mercy, O Lord, for we have sinned.*
- 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 *Be reconciled to God, for now is the acceptable time.*
- Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 *Your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.*

- **Reflection**

The Liturgical use of ashes originated in the Old Testament times. Ashes symbolize mourning, mortality, and penance. In the book of Esther, Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes when he heard of the decree of King Ahasuerus to kill all the Jewish people in the Persian Empire (Esther 4:1). Job repented in sackcloth and ashes (Job 42:6). Prophesying the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem, David wrote, "I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest prayer with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." (Daniel 9:3)

Jesus made reference to ashes, "If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have reformed in sackcloth and ashes long ago" (Matthew 11:21).

The Church adapted the use of ashes to mark the beginning of the penitential season of Lent when we remember our mortality and mourn for our sins. In our present liturgy for Ash Wednesday, we use ashes made from the burned palm branches distributed on Palm Sunday of the previous year. As we begin this holy season of Lent in preparation for Easter, we must remember the significance of the ashes we have received: We mourn and do penance for our sins. We again convert our hearts to the Lord, who suffered, died and rose for our salvation. We renew the promises made at our baptism, when we died to an old life and rose to a new live with Christ. Finally, mindful that the kingdom of this world passes away, we strive to live the kingdom of God now and look forward to its fulfillment in heaven.

<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/reflections/ash-wednesday-20618>

- **Prayer**

Almighty and everlasting God, you despise nothing you have made and forgive all who are penitent.

Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our brokenness, 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

Thursday, February 18, 2021

- **Readings**

- Deuteronomy 30:15-20 *I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.*
- Psalm 1 *Happy are they who hope in the Lord.*
- Luke 9:22-25 *Those who lose their lives for my sake will save it.*



- **Reflection**

The most important thing about any suffering we experience is not how painful it is but how purifying. No one passes through this life without some suffering. Saint Teresa of Avila universally regarded as one of the greatest of mystics saw suffering as a source of purification.

She once wrote that God looks around to find where the greatest love is and there He sends the greatest suffering. And where did He find the greatest love? Surely in the One who described Himself as the Son of Man. Could the words of Lamentations apply more to anyone as much as to Jesus: "All you who pass this way, look and see: is there any sorrow like the sorrow inflicted on me?" (Lam 1:12).

If we have had good health in life let us bow our heads in gratitude. It should also lead us to have great sympathy for those who have to carry the ongoing burden of painful suffering.

<https://www.sacredspace.ie/scripture/luke-922-25#>

- **Prayer**

Dear Lord Jesus, you, the eternal Word, through whom all things come into being, you became flesh among us so that you could speak with us, walk with us, pray with us, and yes even die with us. You became a human being among other human beings so that nothing human would be alien to you, so that in everything, except sin, you would be like us. AMEN (Heart Speaks to Heart, 19)

Friday, February 19, 2021

- **Readings**

- Isaiah 58:1-9a *Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice*
- Psalm 51 *A broken humbles heart, O God, you will not scorn.*
- Matthew 9:14-15 *When the bridegroom is taken away from them, then my disciples will fast.*

- **Reflection**

Jesus wanted John's disciples, along with his own disciples, to realize that while he was with them, it was a time of joy. This was not a time of mourning or fasting or weeping. It is simply inappropriate to fast at a wedding feast. No, a wedding feast is a time of celebration. But as bold as this statement is about Jesus' presence altering everything, we also find a hint that his death will alter everything again, and this time in a much more painful way. The point: Jesus' presence conditions the time; it changes everything; it determines our joy. (<https://www.heartlight.org/wjd/matthew/0419-wjd.html>)

- **Prayer**

Almighty and tender Shepherd, I thank you for loving me so much that you hear my prayers. I believe that Jesus' presence means joy for my life. But I also recognize that I live between his two appearances on earth, and thus the joy is not as great as it was when he was here and far less than it will be when he returns. Give me strength, courage, and joy so that I can face the challenges of this waiting time with faithfulness. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Saturday, February 20, 2021

- **Readings**

- Isaiah 58:9b-14 *If you remove the yoke of the needy, your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.*
- Psalm 86 *Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may be faithful in your sight.*
- Luke 5:27-32 *I have come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*

- **Reflection**

What a great reply: "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners." It is a statement open to all humanity in need of redemption. It is an affirmation that shows us that God is not exclusive. Christ has come for all sinners, and he extends to everyone his call to repent and be transformed by his grace. It shows us that Christ wants to reach everybody and forgive everybody. He is not like us, who discriminate and hold grudges. When someone sins more, God makes particular efforts to reach that person and offer his pardon and his elevating grace. What an example for us to follow when we have difficult moments in our dealings with others! Christ teaches us patience. Christ teaches us that we must love and build bridges whenever the opportunity arises.

(<https://www.epriest.com/reflections/view/140>)

- **Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for giving me the solution to my life. Help me to forgive wholeheartedly those who have done me wrong. Help me to love them, pray for them and do good to them even though they hinder and harm me. Help me to strive tirelessly to bring to the world your solution to division, discrimination, hatred, and war.



Sunday, February 21, 2021 – First Sunday of Lent

- **Readings**

- Genesis 9:8-15 *God's covenant with Noah when he was delivered from the flood.*
- Psalm 25 *Your paths, Lord, are love and faithfulness for those who keep your covenant.*
- 1 Peter 3:18-22 *The waters of the flood prefigured the baptism which now saves you.*
- Mark 1:12-15 *Jesus was tempted by Satan, and the Angels waited on him.*

- **Reflection**

Years ago, I used to think that Jesus' announcement of the kingdom being near meant something like, "You can go to heaven after you die." Now I realize that I had mistaken Jesus' primary message. Though his Good News does relate to what happens after death, it also has everything to do with this life. In Jesus, God was beginning to reign on earth in a new way, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Under God's sovereign authority, righteousness would triumph over injustice and multifaceted peace would fill the earth.

Through Christ, you and I can live today under the reign of God, however incompletely. When we seek God's agenda for our lives, when we live for his purposes and glory, when we bow before him in worship, we are experiencing the kingdom of God, in anticipation of that day when all the earth will flourish under the glorious reign of God. (<https://www.theologyofwork.org>)

- **Prayer**

Dear Lord, what fantastic news you once delivered: The Kingdom of God is near! Thank you for being the one who not only announced the coming of God's reign, but also inaugurated that reign through your ministry. Thank you, most of all, for opening up to me the possibility of living under God's rule because of your death and resurrection.

Help me, Lord Jesus, to live each moment as a subject of the King of kings. Guide me, empower me, and use me for your purposes. May the reality of your kingdom be seen in my life each and every day. Amen.