

ASH WEDNESDAY  
Service of Worship  
*Wednesday, March 1, 2006*

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wickedness, 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, forever and ever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalm 25:1-10

EPISTLE

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

THE MESSAGE

*(Congregation stands)*

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now

kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

*(Silence is then kept for a time; then all shall kneel or sit)*

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

*(The following Psalm will be said responsively)*

**PSALM 51 (Miserere mei, Deus)**

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness, \*in your great compassion blot out my offenses.**
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness \*and cleanse me from my sin.**
- 3 For I know my transgressions, \*and my sin is ever before me.**
- 4 Against you only have I sinned \*and done what is evil in your sight.**
- 5 And so you are justified when you speak \*and upright in your judgment**
- 6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, \*a sinner from my mother's womb.**
- 7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, \*and will make me understand wisdom secretly.**
- 8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; \*wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.**
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, \*that the body you have broken may rejoice.**
- 10 Hide your face from my sins \*and blot out all my iniquities.**
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, \*and renew a right spirit within me.**
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence \*and take not your holy Spirit from me.**
- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again \*and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**
- 14 I shall teach your ways to the wicked, \*and sinners shall return to you.**
- 15 Deliver me from death, O God, \*and my tongue shall sing of your**

**righteousness, O God of my salvation.**

**16** Open my lips, O Lord, **\*and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

**17** Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice; **\*but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.**

**18** The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; **\*a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

### LITANY OF PENITENCE

*(kneeling or sitting)*

*(the minister and people)*

**Most holy and merciful Father: We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.**

*(responsively)*

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven. **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

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. **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

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

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, **We confess to you, Lord.**

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves, **We confess to you, Lord.**

Our intemperate love of worldly comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work, **We confess to you, Lord.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to

commend the faith that is in us, **We confess to you, Lord.**

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 toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward 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; **Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation, **That we may show forth 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.**

*(The Minister prays)*

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live, has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and with sincere hearts believe his holy Gospel. Therefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(The Peace of Christ is exchanged.)*