

Ash Wednesday Mass

The Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

In the course of today's Mass, ashes are blessed and distributed. These are made from the olives branches or branches of other trees that were blessed the previous year [on Palm Sunday].

The Penitential Rite is omitted, and the Distribution of Ashes takes its place.

The blessing and distribution of ashes may also take place outside Mass. In this case, the rite is preceded by a Liturgy of the Word, with the Entrance Antiphon, Collect, and the readings with their chants as at Mass. Then there follow the Homily and the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes. The rite is concluded with the Universal Prayer (Bidding Prayers), the Blessing, and the Dismissal of the faithful.

Collect

Grant, O Lord,
that we may begin, with holy fasting, this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading Joel 2:12-18 (JB)

A reading from the prophet Joel.

‘Now, now (is the Lord who speaks), come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.’ Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent. Who knows if he will not turn again, will not relent, will not leave a blessing as he passes, oblation and libation for the Lord your God? Sound the trumpet in Zion! Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, call the people together, summon the community, assemble the elders, gather the children, even the infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom and the bride her alcove. Between vestibule and altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, lament. Let them say, 'Spare your people, Lord! Do not make your heritage a thing of shame, a byword for the nations. Why should it be said among the nations, 'Where is their God?' Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land, took pity on his people.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 50:3-6, 12-14, 17 (Grail)

Response: **Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Have mercy on me, God, in your
kindness; in your compassion blot out
my offense. O wash me more and
more from my guilt and cleanse me
from my sin.

Response: **Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

My offences truly I know
them; my sin is always
before me
Against you, you alone, have I
sinned; what is evil in your sight I
have done.

Response: **Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

A pure heart create for me, O
God, put a steadfast spirit
within me.
Do not cast me away from your
presence, nor deprive me of your holy
spirit.

Response: **Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Give me again the joy of your
help; with a spirit of fervour
sustain me,
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

Response: **Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Second Reading
2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

We are ambassadors for Christ, it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God. As his fellow workers, we beg you once again not to neglect the grace of God that you have received. For he says: At the favourable time, I have listened to you; on the day of salvation I came to your help. Well, now is the favourable time; this is the day of salvation.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Gospel
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (JB)

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!
A pure heart create for me, O God,
and give me again the joy of your help.
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

or

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!
Harden not your hearts today,
but listen to the voice of the
Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.
A reading from the holy gospel ✠ according to Matthew.
Praise to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

After the homily, the priest, standing with hands joined, says:

Dear brethren (brothers and sisters),
let us humbly ask God our Father that he be pleased to
bless, with the abundance of grace,
these ashes, which we will put on our heads in penitence.

After a brief prayer in silence and with hands extended, he says:

O God, who are moved by acts of humility
and respond with forgiveness to works of
penance, lend your merciful ear to our prayers
and, in your kindness, pour out the grace of your ✠ blessing
on your servants who are marked with these ashes,
that, as they follow the Lenten observances,
they may be worthy to come with minds made
pure to celebrate the Paschal mystery of your son.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

or

O God, who desire not the death of sinners, but their conversion, mercifully hear our prayers and, in your kindness, be pleased to bless ✠ these ashes, that we, who acknowledge we are but ashes and shall return to dust, may, through a steadfast observance of Lent, gain pardon for sins and newness of life after the likeness of your Risen Son. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything.

Then the priest places ashes on the head of all those present who come to him and says to each one:

Repent and believe in the gospel.

or

Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.

A song is sung during the distribution of ashes.

After the distribution of ashes, the priest washes his hands and proceeds to the Universal Prayer (Bidding Prayers), and continues with Mass in the usual way.

The creed is not said.

Prayer over the Offerings

As we solemnly offer the annual sacrifice for the beginning of Lent, we entreat you, O Lord, that, through works of penance and charity, we may turn away from harmful pleasures and, cleansed from our sins, may become worthy to celebrate devoutly the passion of your Son. Who lives and reigns, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Preface
Lent Preface III/IV

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right and just.

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you will that our self-denial should give you thanks,
humble our sinful pride, contribute to the feeding of the poor,
and so help us imitate you in your kindness.

And so we glorify you with countless angels,
as with one voice of praise we acclaim:
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts . . .

or

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right and just.

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For through bodily fasting, you restrain our faults, raise up our minds,
and bestow both virtue and its rewards, through Christ our Lord.

Through him the angels praise your majesty,
dominions adore and powers tremble before you.

Heaven and the virtues of heaven
and the blessed seraphim worship together in exultation.

May our voices, we pray, join with theirs in humble praise, as we acclaim:
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts . . .

Prayer after Communion

May the sacrament we have received sustain us, O Lord,
that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you
and be for us a healing remedy.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer over the People

For the dismissal, the priest stands facing the people and, extending his hands over them, says this prayer:

Pour out a spirit of compunction, O God,
on those who bow before your majesty,
and, by your mercy, may they merit the rewards you promise to those who do
penance.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer texts from the *Roman Missal* (2010)
Readings from the *Lectionary* Volume 1 (1981)