

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017

Ash Wednesday

Purple



**Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Joel 2:1-2, 12-17** English Standard Version (ESV)

**The Day of the LORD**

2 <sup>1</sup> Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, <sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.

**Return to the LORD**

<sup>12</sup> “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup> and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. <sup>14</sup> Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? <sup>15</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; <sup>16</sup> gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. <sup>17</sup> Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, “Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.<sup>[a]</sup> Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

**Footnote:** a. or *reproach*, *that the nations should rule over them.*

**COMMENT:** Joel's prophecies reflect a time when the priesthood of the Second Temple late in the Persian period about 400 BC. A plague of locusts, either actual or a metaphor for an invading army, appeared as a warning of a day of judgment coming to Judah and Jerusalem. The second part of the reading proclaim a call to repentance ending with a promise of forgiveness if the appropriate liturgical practices were followed.

## **Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **Giving to the Needy**

6<sup>1</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

5 “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### **Fasting**

16 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### **Lay Up Treasures in Heaven**

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust<sup>[a]</sup> destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Footnote:** a. or *worm*; also verse 20.

**COMMENT:** Jesus sarcastically condemns the ostentatious piety of almsgiving and fasting as utter hypocrisy. He balances this sarcasm by telling how private religious practices produce a more effective way to express a sincere relationship with God.

**Psalm 51:1-19** *Miserere mei, Deus* Grail Psalter

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

<sup>1</sup> *For the Choirmaster. A Maskil of David*

<sup>2</sup> *after Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, "David has gone to the house of Abimeleck."*

<sup>3</sup> Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.  
In your compassion blot out my offence.

<sup>4</sup> O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin. **℟**

<sup>5</sup> My offences truly I know them;  
my sin is always before me

<sup>6</sup> Against you, you alone, have I sinned;  
what is evil in your sight I have done. **℟**

That you may be justified when you give sentence  
and be without reproach when you judge,

<sup>7</sup> O see, in guilt I was born,  
a sinner was I conceived. **℟**

<sup>8</sup> Indeed you love truth in the heart;  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.

<sup>9</sup> O purify me, then I shall be clean;  
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow. **℟**

<sup>10</sup> Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,  
that the bones you have crushed may thrill.

<sup>11</sup> From my sins turn away your face  
and blot out all my guilt. **℟**

<sup>12</sup> A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.

<sup>13</sup> Do not cast me away from your presence,  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **℟**

<sup>14</sup> Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervor sustain me,

<sup>15</sup> that I may teach transgressors your ways  
and sinners may return to you. **℟**

<sup>16</sup> O rescue me, God, my helper,  
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.

<sup>17</sup> O Lord, open my lips  
and my mouth shall declare your praise. **℟**

<sup>18</sup> For in sacrifice you take no delight,  
burnt offering from me you would refuse,  
<sup>19</sup> my sacrifice, a contrite spirit.

A humbled, contrite heart you will not spurn.

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

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This psalm expresses in the simplest words what true repentance involves. First comes the appeal to God trusting God's infinite mercy and steadfast love. Only God's grace can absolve the sinner from whatever transgressions have been committed. A prime moral insight is not only to acknowledge one's sin, but to be aware that even when one commits an offence against one's fellow humans, one sins against God. Thus whatever penalty must be paid is fully justified. The acceptance that we are sinners follows naturally.

### **Short Preface**

And now we give you thanks because you give us the spirit of discipline, that we may triumph over evil and grow in grace, as we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed.

### **Post Communion**

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life: give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive these his inestimable gifts, and also daily endeavour to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**