

PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's,
Warrington*



A Time of Prayer for Use at Home

Preparation

It can be helpful to prepare a little space as a focus for your prayer. Perhaps light a candle or tea light and place it next to a crucifix or icon.

The ashes in the packet have been blessed. Pour them out on to a saucer and dampen them with a little water – not too much, literally a drop or two will be enough.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

Introduction

Today is Ash Wednesday – the first day of Lent. A long time ago, people wore sackcloth and ashes to show that they were sorry for their sins. Today, we receive ashes as a sign of repentance. In other words, during the 40 days of Lent, we try to make changes in our lives that help us to come closer to the Lord. We do this through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. In so doing, we prepare ourselves to renew our Baptismal Promises on Easter Day.

Gospel

(Mt 6: 1-6, 16-18)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

R. Glory 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.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Receiving the Ashes

Dip your thumb into the ashes and make a small sign of the cross with them on your forehead. Then, pray:

Lord,

I receive these ashes as a sign of my love for you.

I can see your love at work in my life and I desire to draw closer to you.

May this Lent be a time of grace for me.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Reflection

Now take a few moments to think how you could mark the season of Lent this year...

Prayer

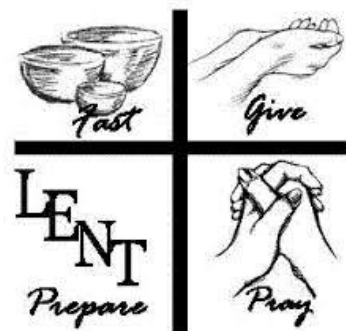
Have I got out of the habit of spending a few moments in prayer each day?

Fasting

Would it help to give something up this Lent?

Almsgiving

Is there a charity I would like to support this Lent?



The Lord's Prayer

Blessing

May the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

Acknowledgements

Gospel Reading from *The Jerusalem Bible* © 1966 by Darton Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd.

More Prayers & Readings for Ash Wednesday

Collect

Gracious and merciful God,
you look with love upon a sinful people
and desire only their return to you.

We beg of you the grace to live this holy season,
to persevere in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.
By the discipline of Lent
purify our hearts of all pretension,
bring us back to you,
and make the whole Church ready
to celebrate the mysteries of Easter.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

First Reading

(Joel 2: 12-18)

A reading from the prophet Joel

'Now, now – it 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.

R. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 50

- 1 **Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.**

- 2 **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.**
- 3 **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.**
- 4 **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.**

Second Reading

(2 Corinthians 5: 20-6: 2)

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians

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.

R. Thanks be to God.

Intercessions

In this sacred time, may the whole Christian people be
more abundantly nourished by every word that comes
from the mouth of God.

Lord, in your mercy. **R. Hear our prayer.**

May peace and security be firmly established
everywhere.

Lord, in your mercy. **R. Hear our prayer.**

May all who are afflicted or suffering temptation be
strengthened by the grace of God.

Lord, in your mercy. **R. Hear our prayer.**

May all of us learn to distribute the fruits of self-denial
for the good of those in need.

Lord, in your mercy. **R. Hear our prayer.**

May those who have died, through the mercy of God,
share in the Resurrection.

Lord, in your mercy. **R. Hear our prayer.**

Concluding Prayer

May the grace 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.

R. Amen.

Acknowledgements

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