

ASH WENDESDAY

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

(*Wis 11: 24, 25, 27*)

You are merciful to all, O Lord, and despise nothing that you have made. You overlook people's sins, to bring them to repentance, and you spare them, for you are the Lord our God.

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

COLLECT

Let us pray. (*pause*)

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 in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. R. Amen.

FIRST READING (*Rend your hearts, not your garments.*)

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Joel (Jl 2:12-18)

Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment. Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind him a blessing, offerings and libations for the Lord, your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion! proclaim a fast, call an assembly; Gather the people, notify the congregation; Assemble the elders, gather the children and the infants at the breast; Let the bridegroom quit his room and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep, And say, "Spare, O Lord, your people, and make not your heritage a reproach, with the nations ruling over them! Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Then the Lord was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people.—The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17)

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned. (Cf. Ps 51:3a)

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. (R)

For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: "Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight." (R)

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. (R)

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. (R)

SECOND READING (*Be reconciled to God. Behold, now is the acceptable time.*)

A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

(2 Cor 5:20—6:2)

Brothers and sisters:

We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says: *In an acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you.* Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

—The Word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Cf. Ps 95:8)

R. Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (R)

GOSPEL (*Your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (6:1-6, 16-18)

Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do

in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. Any your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. Any your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.” —The Gospel of the Lord.

BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES

After the Homily, the Priest, standing with hands joined, says:

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

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

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 R. 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, which we intend to receive upon our heads, 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. R. 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.

After the distribution of ashes, the Priest washes his hands and proceeds to the Universal Prayer, and continues the 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. R. Amen.

PREFACE IV OF LENT

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

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Ps 1: 2-3

He who ponders the law of the Lord day and night will yield fruit in due season.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. 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. R. Amen.