

# Ash Wednesday Reflection



## Hymn – Forty Days and Forty Nights

1 Forty days and forty nights  
You were fasting in the wild;  
Forty days and forty nights  
Tempted, and yet undefiled.

2 Sunbeams scorching all the day  
Chilly dew-drops nightly shed,  
Prowling beasts about your way,  
Stones your pillow, earth your bed.

3 Let us your endurance share  
And from earthly greed abstain,  
With you vigilant in prayer,  
With you strong to suffer pain.

4 Keep, O keep us, saviour dear,  
Ever constant by your side,  
That with you we may appear  
At th'eternal Eastertide.

## The Welcome – Rev'd Helen Cosstick

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit:  
a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: since early days Christians have observed with love and devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection. It became the custom of the Church to prepare for this by a season of penitence and fasting.

By carefully keeping these days, Christians take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.

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.

**All**                **Holy God,  
                      holy and strong,  
                      holy and immortal,  
                      have mercy on us**

Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully,

**All: 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, lamenting our sins**

and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
we may receive from you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect forgiveness and peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**First Reading: *Isaiah 58: 1-12***

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practised righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgements, they delight to draw near to God. 'Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?' Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

This is the word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Reading: *John 8: 1-11***

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All: Glory to You, O Lord.**

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the

first to throw a stone at her.' And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to You, O Christ.**

## **Talk**

### **The Liturgy of Penitence**

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father,

**All: have mercy on us.**

God the Son,

**All: have mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit,

**All: have mercy on us.**

Trinity of love,

**All: have mercy on us.**

**All: Most merciful God,  
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we confess that we have sinned  
in thought, word and deed.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart,  
and mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

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.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you, Lord ...

all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Our anger at our own frustration

and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts  
and our dishonesty in daily life and work.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship  
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

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.

**All: Accept our repentance, Lord.**

For all false judgements,  
for uncharitable thoughts towards our neighbours  
and for our prejudice and contempt towards those who differ from us.

**All: Accept our repentance, Lord.**

For our waste and pollution of your creation  
and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

**All: Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

**All: Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,

**All: that we may show your glory in the world.**

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

**All: bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

*Silence is kept.*

**All: We have not loved you with our whole heart.  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

**In your mercy  
forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are,  
and direct what we shall be;  
that we may do justly,  
love mercy,  
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

### **Signing with the Cross**

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,  
Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

Let us pray:

God our Father,  
you create us from the dust of the earth:  
grant that these ashes may be for us  
a sign of our penitence  
and a symbol of our mortality;  
for it is by your grace alone  
that we receive eternal life  
in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**All: Amen.**

### **The 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.

**All: Amen.**