

The Churches of the Parish of Berkswich

in the Church of England Diocese of Lichfield

Ash Wednesday Eucharist with Commination



In the sixth century, wishing to observe and exact a 40 day Lent, the church in the west started to mark the beginning of Lent on a Wednesday, but it was not till 1091 that this became 'Ash Wednesday' with the custom of marking foreheads with ash as a reminder that we all die and return to dust. Following the Reformation however, the practice of Ashing became practically unknown in the Anglican church - for hundreds of years after, the imposition of ashes was unheard of in any service of the Church of England or her daughter churches, and none of the prayer books through these centuries make any room for the practice.

The first prayer book to authorize imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, "after a four-hundred-year absence from official Anglican rites," was the Episcopal Church USA's Book of Common Prayer 1979. In its place was what was known as The Commination – from the Latin for a "threatening".

The point of the Commination was to bring the worshipper to a place of repentant prayer—not pretending, not dissembling, but open, true, and earnest repentance. The litany of Commination is shaped around a movement from feelings of guilt (over our wrongdoings) to grace (remembering the divine mercy of God) to thanksgiving (for that grace demonstrated to us by God)

To achieve that goal, the Commination has the following elements:

- *a brief exhortation about the discipline of penance*
- *a series of curses, to which the people respond "Amen"*
- *a pre-written homily*
- *Psalm 51*
- *the Kyrie*
- *the Lord's Prayer*
- *versicles and responses*
- *two prayers*
- *the peace*

In our secular world, the short-lived nature of life is a matter of sorrow, but in Lent we can find joy that all things pass away, including ourselves. In Lent, we can prepare for the 'eternity's sunrise' (as Blake put it), of Easter day by learning to 'kiss' joys as they pass our way rather, than trying to hang on to them forever. That is easier said than done, but we are invited to try.

The gathering

The Lent Prose

*If you are able, please stand as the Cross enters in
silence before the Cantors sing*

Hear us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we
have sinned against thee.

**Hear us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we
have sinned against thee.**

To thee, Redeemer, on thy throne of glory:
lift we our weeping eyes in holy pleadings:
listen, O Jesu, to our supplications.

Hear us, O Lord...

O thou chief cornerstone, right hand of the
Father:
way of salvation, gate of life celestial:
cleanse thou our sinful souls from all defilement.

Hear us, O Lord...

God, we implore thee, in thy glory seated:
bow down and hearken to thy weeping children:
pity and pardon all our grievous trespasses.

Hear us, O Lord...

Sins oft committed, now we lay before thee:
with true contrition, now no more we veil them:
grant us, Redeemer, loving absolution.

Hear us, O Lord...

Innocent captive, taken unresisting:
falsely accused, and for us sinners sentenced,
save us, we pray thee, Jesu, our Redeemer.

Hear us, O Lord...

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Lord of glory be with you.

And also with you

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you
**Because by your holy cross, you have
redeemed the world.**

The Introduction

*The Priest explains the meaning of Lent
and invites all to observe it faithfully*

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
since early days Christians have observed
with great devotion the time of our
Lord's passion and resurrection
and prepared 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.

The Collect for the day

Let us pray

Silence is kept

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.

The liturgy of the word

First reading Joel 2.1-2, 12-17

A reading from the Prophet Joel

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my
holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land
tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is
near— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of
clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread
upon the mountains a great and powerful army
comes; their like has never been from of old, nor
will be again after them in ages to come. Yet
even now, says the Lord, return to me with all
your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with
mourning; rend your hearts and not your
clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is
gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and
abounding in steadfast love, and relents from
punishing. 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? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a
fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged;
gather the children, even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride
her canopy. Between the vestibule and the
altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord,
weep. Let them say, 'Spare your people,
O Lord, and do not make your heritage a
mockery, a byword among the nations. Why
should it be said among the peoples, "Where is
their God?" '

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel reading

If in church, please stand as the cantors sing

Praise to you, Lord Jesus
King of love divine.
Cleanse us by thy presence
Make us ever thine.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus,
Christ, the Son of God.
Let us hear you speaking
Through your holy Word.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to John ✠
Glory to you, O Lord.

8.1-11

While 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.
Praise to you, O Christ.

A Commination

The Priest says

Brothers and sisters, there has been, from ancient times, a godly custom in the Church, that, at the beginning of Lent, Christian people should be warned and reminded in a special manner, of the wrath of God revealed by heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, in order that they may take to heart their own sinfulness and continuing need to turn to God, and not become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. It is therefore fitting, that at this time (in the presence of you all) should be read the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners, gathered out of the twenty-seventh chapter of Deuteronomy, and other places of Scripture; and that you should answer to every sentence, Amen: to the intent that, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, you may be moved to sincere and true repentance, and may walk more warily in these dangerous days, fleeing from such vices, for the which you affirm with your own mouths, the curse of God to be due.

Then the Priest says.

Cursed be anyone who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the Lord, a thing made by the hands of craftsman, and sets it up in secret. **Amen**

(Deut 27:15)

Cursed be anyone who dishonours his father and his mother. **Amen**

(Deut 27:16)

Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow. **Amen**

(Deut 27:19)

"Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses." **Amen**

(Prov 28:27)

Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD." **Amen**

(Jerimiah 17.5)

Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of God's law by carrying them out. **Amen**
(Deut 27:26)

Then the Priest says

Now seeing that all are accursed (as the Prophet David bears witness) who err, and wander from the commandments of God, let us (remembering the dreadful judgment hanging over our heads, and being always at hand) return to our Lord God, with all contrition and meekness of heart mourning and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offences, and seeking to bear fruit worthy of repentance. Even now is the axe laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit, is cut down and thrown into the fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God: he shall rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulphur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For behold, the Lord is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Then, on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment shall be revealed, shall appear the wrath that those with a hard and impenitent heart are storing up for themselves, who presumed upon the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience, by which he meant to lead them to repentance. Then they will call upon me, says the Lord, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently but will not find me. And because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, it shall be too late to knock, when the door shall be shut, and too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice. O terrible voice of most just judgment, which shall be pronounced upon them, when it

shall be said to them: "Depart from me, you cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Let us, brothers and sisters, take heed in good time, for now is the day of salvation. Night is coming when no one can work; but let us while we have the light, believe in the light, that we may become sons of light; that we may not be cast into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Let us not abuse the goodness of God, who calls us mercifully to amendment, and of his endless pity promises us forgiveness of that which is past, if (with a whole mind and true heart) we return to him. Though our sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone (declares the Lord God) so turn and live. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities. Let us therefore return to him, who is the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners, assuring our selves that he is ready to receive us, and most willing to pardon us, if we come to him, with faithful repentance, if we will submit our selves to him, and from that moment on walk in his ways; if we will take his easy yoke, and light burden upon us, to follow him in lowliness, patience, and charity, and be ordered by the governance of his Holy Spirit, seeking always his glory, and serving him duly in our vocation with thanksgiving. If we do this, Christ will deliver us from the curse of the law, and from the extreme malediction, that shall alight upon those who shall be set on the left hand. And he will set us on his right hand, and give us the blessed benediction of his Father, commanding us to take possession of his glorious kingdom; to which he condescends to bring us all, out of his infinite mercy. Amen.

*The Priest moves to the altar rail and kneels.
Those in church may wish to kneel too, those at*

*home may like to bow their heads as we say
together the*

Misere mei deus (Psalm 51:1-17)

Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; according to the abundance of your compassion blot out my offences. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my faults and my sin is ever before me. Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, So that you are justified in your sentence and righteous in your judgment. I have been wicked even from my birth, a sinner when my mother conceived me. Behold, you desire truth deep within me and shall make me understand wisdom in the depths of my heart. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones you have broken may rejoice. Turn your face from my sins and blot out all my misdeeds. Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy spirit from me. Give me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your gracious spirit; Then shall I teach your ways to the wicked and sinners shall return to you. Deliver me from my guilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it; you take no delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Then the Priest says

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,**

**thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.**

Lord, save your servants,
who put their trust in you.

Lord, send them help from your holy place,
and evermore defend them.

Help us, O God, our Saviour;
**and for the glory of your Name deliver us;
be merciful to us sinners, for your name's sake.**

Lord, hear our prayer,
and let our cry come to you.

Let us pray.

O Lord, we implore you to mercifully hear our prayers, and spare all those who confess their sins to you, that they (whose consciences by sin are accused) by your merciful pardon may be absolved; through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

O Most mighty God, and merciful Father, you have compassion upon all people, and hate nothing that you have made: you do not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn from sin, and be saved: mercifully forgive us our offenses, and comfort us, who are grieved and wearied with the burden of our sin. Your property is to have mercy, to you alone belongs the forgiveness of sins: spare us therefore good Lord, spare your people whom you have redeemed. Enter not into judgment with your servants, who are vile dust, and miserable sinners, but so turn your anger from us who meekly acknowledge our vileness, and truly repent of our faults: so make haste to help us in this world, that we may ever live with you in the world to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Turn us, O good Lord, and so shall we be
turned. Be favourable O Lord, be favourable to
your people, who turn to you, in weeping,**

fasting, and praying, for you are a merciful God, full of compassion, long suffering, and of a great pity. You spare us when we deserve punishment, and in your wrath you think upon mercy, spare your people good Lord, spare them, and let not your heritage be brought to confusion: hear us O Lord for your mercy is great, and after the multitude of your mercies, look upon us; through the merits and mediation of your blessed Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Then the Priest shall stand, turn to face the congregation and say

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance on you and give you peace, both now and evermore. **Amen**

All may exchange a sign of peace.

The liturgy of the sacrament

Offertory Prayer

Risen Lord and Saviour, present here among us with the wealth of your love. Cleanse us from sin and give us the faith to offer our praise and grow in your grace. **Amen**

The Eucharistic Prayer

People of God, the Lord is here
His spirit is with us.

People of dust, lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

People of ashes, let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and praise, almighty God and everlasting Father, through Jesus Christ your Son. For in these forty days you lead us into the desert of repentance that through a pilgrimage of prayer and discipline we may grow in grace and learn to be your people once again. Through fasting, prayer and acts of service you bring us back to your generous heart. Through study of your holy word you open our eyes to your presence in the world

and free our hands to welcome others into the radiant splendour of your love. As we prepare to celebrate the Easter feast with joyful hearts and minds we bless you for your mercy and join with saints and angels for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

✠ **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord, you are holy indeed, the source of all holiness; grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit, and according to your holy will, these gifts of bread and wine may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me. ✠

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Jesus Christ is Lord:

**Lord, by your cross and resurrection
you have set us free.**

You are the Saviour of the world.

And so, Father, calling to mind his death on the cross, his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world; rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming in glory, we celebrate this memorial of our redemption. As we offer you this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, we bring before you this bread and this cup and we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. Send the Holy Spirit on your people and gather into one in your kingdom all who share this one bread and one cup, so that we, with all the faithful departed, and in the company of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Thomas, St Chad, and all the saints, may praise and glorify

you for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Lord Jesus, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Breaking of the bread

The priest breaks the consecrated bread.

We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.

**God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
bring us to light and life.**

An act of Spiritual Communion

Those at home, as they look on to the consecrated elements - the Body and Blood of Our Lord present in the Bread and Wine, are invited to say these words

In union, dear Father, with Christian people throughout the world and across the centuries gathered to make Eucharist, hearing your holy Word and receiving the Precious Body and Blood, I offer you praise and thanksgiving. Even though I am exiled from tasting the Bread of Heaven and drinking the Cup of Life I pray that you will unite me with all the baptised and with your Son who gave his life for us. Come Lord Jesus, dwell in me and send your Holy Spirit that I may be filled with your presence.

Those in church are invited to receive communion in one kind only. When you remove your mask,

please ensure you wash your hands before and after receiving. Please do not say Amen when the host is given to you. As people in church receive, an organ voluntary will play.

God's holy gifts
for God's holy people.

**Jesus Christ is holy,
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Prayer after 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.

God of our pilgrimage, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Refresh and sustain us as we go forward on our journey, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The dismissal

**In company with Christians past,
we keep the vigil, watch and pray,
and with the tempted Christ,
reject the superficial, easy way.**

**We will not turn our stones to bread,
or from the temple's heights be hurled;
nor look for cheap success within
the ways and values of the world.**

**Forgive us, Lord, the times we fail
to keep that promise day by day,
and give us grace to follow you
on faith's more costly, rocky way.**

**Then lead us on to find once more
the glory veiled but never lost:
the image of our God in us,**

restored by grace at such a cost!

O perfectly related God,
eternal Father, Spirit, Son,
renew us in the Covenant
that makes your many people one.

Then move us on from fast to feast.
where life and wholeness are restored,
and you, in triune majesty
are honoured, worshipped and adored.

*Michael Forster (b1946) based on St Gregory the
Great (540-604)*

Dismissal Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to

Luke 15:4-7

Glory to you, O Lord.

‘Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

The Lord be with you
And also with you.

May God the Father, who does not despise the broken spirit, give to you a contrite heart. **Amen**

May Christ, who bore our sins in his body on the tree, heal you by his wounds. **Amen**

May the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth, speak to you words of pardon and peace. **Amen**

And the blessing of God almighty, the ✠ Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

*Equipped to go out into our world, we leave in
silence*

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