

The Propers For Ash Wednesday

Introduction to Lent

Lent is the time to prepare for Pascha. The season grew in stages. By the end of the fourth century there were already three weeks of this preparation. Afterwards a fourth week was added. Lent was originally the period when catechumens were readied for Baptism. The faithful shared in this preparation because all Christians, due to their human weakness, need to be recalled to conversion. By the end of the 5th century Lent lasted 40 days, as it does today. The oldest and most important days in Lent are the Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. If we want to understand the theme of any Lenten week, we must turn to the Liturgy of these three days. Between the 6th and 8th centuries the Liturgy of the other days developed. About the same time the selections for the first lessons on Sundays changed, and the prayers and chants, which we have now, were added. Sometimes these newer elements were chosen to fit into the "station" of the day. From the 7th century a different Roman church was chosen by the Roman Patriarch for the celebration of the Liturgy for each day of Lent. The procession, which went to this church, was called a "statio".

How are we going to look at Lent today? If we confine ourselves to the earliest liturgical texts, there can be no doubt as to what should be our approach. Since Pascha/Easter marks Christ's death and resurrection (we must not miss the death-to-life relationship), this preparation for Pascha is a time of mortification (literally deadening), a time of dying to our old selves, in order to enter more deeply into the spirit of Christ. Such an approach leads us to adopt a series of attitudes which will make of us men of deep faith, practicing self-denial, and conscious of the true meaning of our Orthodox Faith living in the Passion, Death and Resurrection.

A personal invitation from your priest:

Dear People of God:

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting.

This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

We invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination, confession and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word and the writings of the Fathers. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now turn aside from our daily duties and enter into the Ash Wednesday Liturgy of the Church.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Priest: Let us pray:

Traditional form:

Almighty everlasting God, spare those who are repentant, be merciful to those who pray to you, and graciously send your holy angel from heaven to ✠ bless and ✠ hallow these ashes, that they may be a wholesome remedy to all who humbly implore your holy name; who accuse themselves by acknowledging their sins, who weep for their evil deeds in the sight of your divine mercy: who humbly and earnestly seek your fatherly love. Grant to us who call upon your holy name, that all who are sprinkled with these ashes for the forgiveness of their sins, may receive health for their bodies and salvation for their souls, through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

O God, who desire not the death but the repentance of sinners, look graciously upon the weakness of our human nature, and in your fatherly love mercifully ✠ bless these ashes which are to be placed upon our heads as a sign of humility and a pledge of your forgiveness. We know that we are but ashes, and because of our weakness must return to dust. May we obtain from your mercy the pardon of all our sins and the rewards promised to those who repent. Through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

Let us pray.

O God, who are moved by our acts of humility and pleased by our works of penance, turn your ear lovingly to our prayers, and by the ashes sprinkled upon the heads of your servants mercifully pour forth upon them the grace of your blessing, fill them with the spirit of repentance and truly grant what they ask for in the right way; and may whatever you grant remain fixed and unchanged always. Through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

Let us pray.

Almighty, everlasting God, who bestowed upon the people of Nineveh, who repented in sackcloth and ashes, your merciful remedies, graciously grant that we may so imitate their outward behavior as inwardly to obtain your forgiveness. Through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

Short form:

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes ✠ may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen.*

The priest now sets incenses and censes the ashes, then blesses the ashes with holy water quietly saying:

Sprinkle me, ✠ O Lord, with hyssop and I shall be made pure, wash me and I shall be clean indeed.

The ashes are imposed on each person with the following words

Remember (Man) that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

All come forward quietly during which the antiphons and psalm below are sung.



Antiphon: Joel 2: 13

Let us change our garments for ashes and sackcloth:↓
let us fast and lament before the Lord: *
for plenteous in mercy is our God to forgive our sins.

Antiphon: Joel 2: 17

Between the porch and the altar, the priests,
the Lord's ministers, shall weep and shall say ↓
Spare, O Lord, spare your people *
and close not the mouths of them that sing to you, O Lord.

Responsory Esther 13; Joel 2: 13

Priest: Let us amend for the better in those things in which we have sinned through ignorance: * lest suddenly overtaken by the day of death, we seek space for repentance and are not able to find it.

People:



Draw near to us O Lord, and have mer - cy: for we have sinned a - gainst you.

Priest: Help us, O God, our Savior:
and for the glory of your Name, O Lord, deliver us.

People:



Draw near to us O Lord, and have mer - cy: for we have sinned a - gainst you.

Priest. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

People:



Draw near to us O Lord, and have mer - cy: for we have sinned a - gainst you.

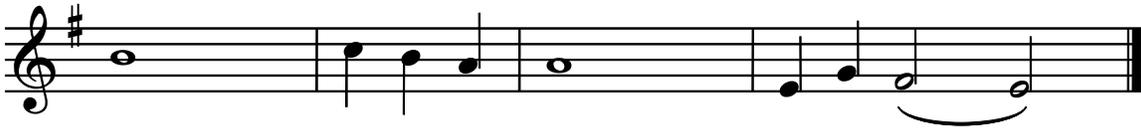
Priest: Grant us, O Lord, to begin our Christian warfare with holy
fasts; that as we are about to do battle with the spirits of
evil we may be defended by the aid of self-denial.
Through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

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If more time is needed, the following Psalm may also be sung
pausing at the asterisks. It may be alternated between men and
women or the left and right sides of the church or between the
Choir and congregation:

Psalm 51 Miserere mei, Deus



- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.
- 5 And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.
- 6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- 7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.
- 8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.

The Introit: Wisdom of Solomon 11:23, 24, 26, 12:1, 2

Psalm 57:2 Miserere mei, Deus



Lord you are mer-ci-ful to all, for you can do all things* and you



o-ver-look peo-ple's sins, so that they may re - pent. For you



love all things that ex-ist, and de-test none of the things that you



have made* for you would not have made an-y-thing if you had



hat - ed it. You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord*



you who love the living; for your im-mor-tal spir-it is in all things.



There - fore you cor - rect lit - tle by lit - tle those who tres - pass,



and you re-mind and warn them of the things through which they sin*



so that they may be freed from wick-ed-ness and put their trust in



you, O Lord. Be mer - ci - ful to me, O God,
be mer - ci - ful, for I have tak - en re - fuge in you* in the
shad - ow of your wings will I take re - fuge un - til this time of trou - ble
has gone by. Glo - ry to the Fa - ther and to the Son, and to the
Ho - ly Spir - it, As it was in the be - gin - ning is now and
ev - er, for all a - ges of a - ges. Amen.



Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Priest: Let us pray.

O Lord, grant, to your faithful people that they may begin the venerable solemnities of fasting with becoming piety, and may persevere to the end with steadfast devotion; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen.*

Defend us O Lord we pray, from all dangers of mind and body; that through the intercession of the blessed and glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God, together with blessed Joseph, your blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and blessed **N.** *(Here mention the titular saint of the church)*, and all the saints, mercifully grant us safety and peace; that all adversities and errors being overcome, your Church may serve you in security and freedom; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen*

O almighty and eternal God, who has dominion over both the living and the dead, and has mercy on all whom you know are yours by faith and good works: we humbly pray that all for whom we have resolved to make supplication whether the present world still holds them in the flesh or the world to come has already received them out of the body, may, through the intercession of all your saints, obtain of your goodness and clemency pardon for all their sins; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen*

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Reader: A Reading from The Book of Joel [2:1-2, 12-17]

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?'" Then the LORD became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people. In response to his people the LORD said: I am sending you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a mockery among the nations.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

+ SILENT REFLECTION +

The Gradual: Psalm 57 *Miserere mei, Deus, Verses 1, 3*



Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful, *
for I have taken refuge in you;

In the shadow of your wings will I take refuge *
until this time of trouble has gone by.

He will send from heaven and save me;↓
he will confound those who trample upon me; *
God will send forth his love and his faithfulness.



Reader: A Reading from the 2nd Letter of Paul
to the Corinthians (5:20b-6:10)

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see--we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

✠ SILENT REFLECTION ✠

The Tract: Psalm 103:10; Ps 79 vs. 8, 9



The Lord has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

V. Remember not our past sins; ↓
let your compassion be swift to meet us; *
for we have been brought very low.

Here genuflect:

Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of your Name; *
deliver us and forgive us our sins, for your Name's sake.

All standing, the Deacon (Priest), in the midst of the congregation reads the Gospel, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, first saying:

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Deacon: The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

People: Glory to you, O Lord!

At that time...Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever 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. And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Deacon: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ.

The Offertory Psalm 30 *Exaltabo te, Domine vs. 1,2.*

Tone III



I will exalt you, O LORD, because you have lifted me up *
and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

O LORD my God, I cried out to you, *
and you restored me to health.

The Secret:

Priest: O Lord, make us worthy to offer these gifts with which we celebrate the beginning of this holy time of Great Lent; And as you transform them, may you also transform us; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages.

People: Amen!

The Blessings before the Pax Domini:

Deacon: Bow down your heads to the Lord.

The priest turns to the people and says:

Priest: Look kindly upon your servants who bow before your Majesty, O Lord, so that strengthened by your Holy Mysteries, they may always be upheld by your heavenly grace in the days to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Amen

OR

Priest: O Good Shepherd, look down upon this flock, and grant that those who abstain from earthly foods may be satisfied with spiritual nourishment; and those whom you have granted to be refreshed with the Divine Mysteries, graciously absolve from all their sins.

People: Amen

Priest: Grant them so to arrange their lives in these days of fasting, that their wills may ever be more perfectly aligned with your will and be ever obedient to your commandments.

People: Amen

Priest: And so sanctify your people with your blessing that their fasts may be acceptable in the eyes of your loving mercy.

People: Amen

Priest: May the Lord God Almighty, Whose glorious Kingdom endures forever, be pleased to bestow these blessings upon you; and...

Priest: The ✠ Peace of The Lord be always with you.

People: And with your spirit.

The Postcommunion Prayers

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

He sings the Prayer with hands extended.

Priest: Let us pray:

O Lord, let these Holy Mysteries which we have received, avail for our salvation and strengthening; that by your grace, these, our fasts may be acceptable to you and profitable to us for our healing and growth; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Second Postcommunion to implore the Intercession of the Saints

Priest: Let us pray:

May the offering of this Holy Sacrifice cleanse and defend us, we beseech you, O Lord, and, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, blessed **N.** (*here mention the titular saint of the church*), and all the saints, purify us from all our sins and deliver us from all adversity; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Third Postcommunion for the Living and the Dead

Priest: Let us pray:

May the sacraments which we have received purify us, we beseech you, O almighty and merciful Lord; and through the intercession of all your saints, grant that this sacrament may not be for us a condemnation, but a helpful intercession for pardon; may it be the washing away of sin, the strength of the weak, a protection against all dangers of the world, and a remission of all the sins of the faithful, whether living or dead. through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Deacon: Bow down your heads before the Lord.

The people kneel and the Priest says:

Priest: Look kindly upon your servants who bow before your Majesty, O Lord, so that strengthened by your Holy Mysteries, they may always be upheld by your heavenly grace in the days to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Amen

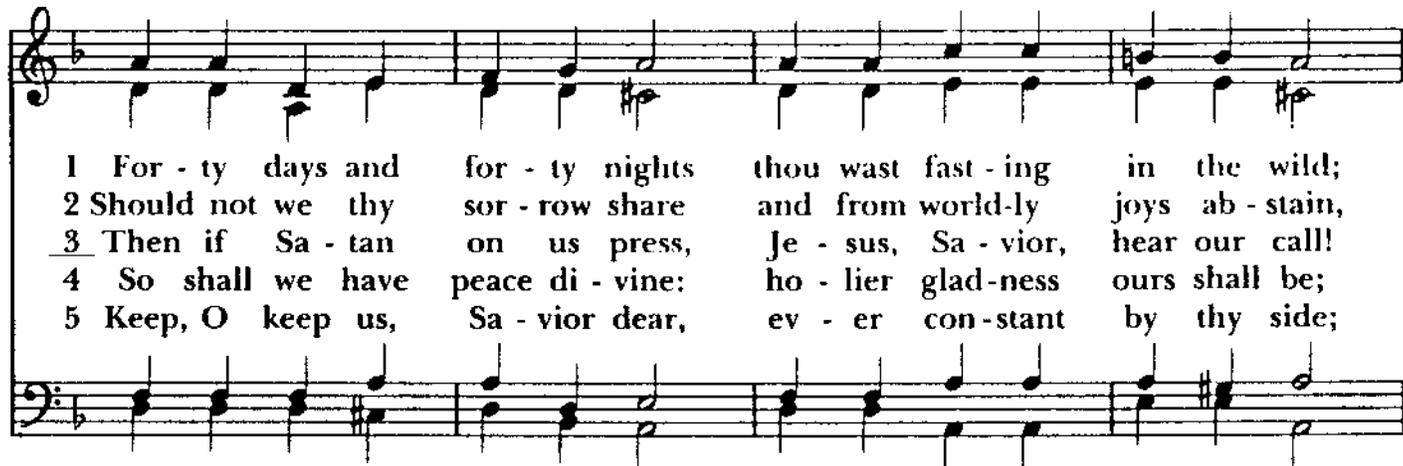
or

Priest: Grant, most merciful Lord,
to your faithful people pardon and peace,
that they may be cleansed from all their sins,
and serve you with a quiet mind and an open heart;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

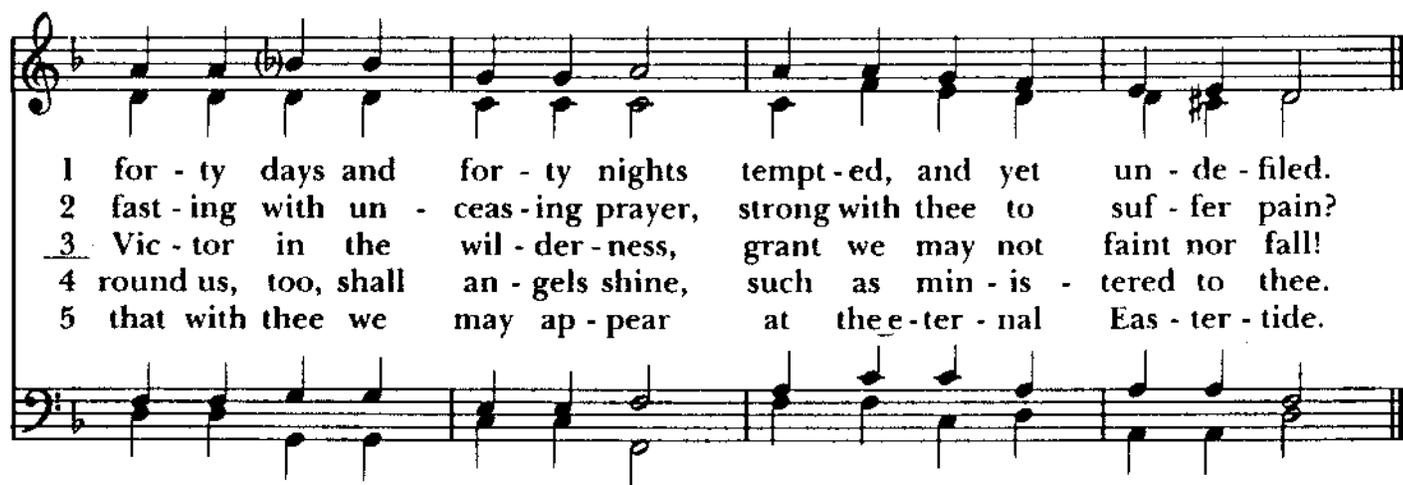
People: Amen.

Deacon: Depart (Go) in peace!

People: Thanks be to God!



1 For - ty days and for - ty nights thou wast fast - ing in the wild;
2 Should not we thy sor - row share and from world - ly joys ab - stain,
3 Then if Sa - tan on us press, Je - sus, Sa - vior, hear our call!
4 So shall we have peace di - vine: ho - lier glad - ness ours shall be;
5 Keep, O keep us, Sa - vior dear, ev - er con - stant by thy side;



1 for - ty days and for - ty nights tempt - ed, and yet un - de - filed.
2 fast - ing with un - ceas - ing prayer, strong with thee to suf - fer pain?
3 Vic - tor in the wil - der - ness, grant we may not faint nor fall!
4 round us, too, shall an - gels shine, such as min - is - tered to thee.
5 that with thee we may ap - pear at the e - ter - nal Eas - ter - tide.

The Prayer of St. Ephrem The Syrian

Priest and people slowly pray this prayer together:

O Lord and Master of my life,
Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair,
lust of power and idle talk.

(All slowly prostrate with heads to the floor, then stand)

But give, rather, the spirit of chastity, humility,
patience, and love to your servant.

(All slowly prostrate with heads to the floor, then stand)

Yes! O Lord and King,
grant me to see my own transgressions
and not to judge my brother,
for blessed are You, for all ages of ages. Amen.

(All slowly prostrate with heads to the floor, then stand)

The Sacred Ministers incline to the Altar and depart in peace.