

St Swithun's Church Family

Ash Wednesday



17th February 2021
8pm Zoom

**Or use this booklet to join
together with us in Spirit**

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** on zoom at 8pm – or read through this service knowing that we are joining our prayers together in Spirit.*

Create a sacred space – if possible gather a candle and a cross if you can find them. Have some ash ready for the imposition or think of something you can use to make the sign of the cross on your body in some way.

In addition we will be audio recording today's sermon which will be uploaded to the website www.saintswithuns.org.uk

There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.

Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.

You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...

Forty days and forty nights

The Lord's my shepherd

Be thou my vision

Lord Jesus think on me

The day thou gavest

<https://youtu.be/9N29ZnwU4LM>

<https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0>

<https://youtu.be/Optrm7IF16s>

<https://youtu.be/NqQ1IPOIZwA>

https://youtu.be/eeC6M_RD3oE

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www.saintswithuns.org.uk

Introduction

Today is Ash Wednesday. 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 Gathering

The Greeting

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

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you

Prayer of preparation

Let us keep a holy Lent:

**Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

The Collect

Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully.

Silence

Holy God, our lives are laid open before you:
rescue us from the chaos of sin
and through the death of your Son
bring us healing and make us whole
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Liturgy of the Word

Bible Reading *2 Corinthians 5: 20b-6: 10*

The reading is from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; 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, labours, 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 honour and dishonour, 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.

For the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Homily *Mother Juliet*

At the very beginning of time scientists believe that the only elements which existed were hydrogen and helium – these are the lightest and simplest elements. No carbon or metal or any complex elements. Then these atoms of hydrogen and helium slowly clustered over unimaginable aeons of time – the clusters became enormous balls of matter that had so much gravity that the atoms were pulled apart in nuclear reactions and the universe's first generation of stars dawned.



All of the heavy elements that exist in the universe – metals and the carbon of our bodies and of the ash or whatever substance we use in our zoom Ash Wednesday Liturgy today, were created in the heart of the first generation of stars.

Today is a strange Ash Wednesday as we are marking our own bodies with the sign of the cross (whether with ash or just drawing a line or using felt pen) However we decide to do this – one of the things we usually remember is our mortality – that is that we will live and then die... but today we can remember, as we say the Ashing words for ourselves, that we are stardust.

All too often our human bodies are an embarrassment to us and sometimes, sadly, we feel shame or despair over our physical selves. But let us remember that our physical bodies are made of the stuff of stars – we – our bodies are star dust. We are made by God, loved by God and inhabited by God. In our reading today we are encouraged to be reconciled to God.



What does it feel like to reconcile our whole selves to God? That when we come to worship we come in our bodies, as entire people. How does it feel to really know that we are made in God's love and that we are beautiful in our bodies, our minds, our souls – how does it feel to know that the whole of us is beautiful? How can we know that is how God sees us?

Sometimes I find it overwhelming to think of the bigness of the universe - there are more stars in our Universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches on Earth. And then mind-blowingly there are more atoms in a grain of sand than there are

stars in the universe – mind-blowing!!! If we think of our place on this planet in time and space – we can feel rather small... And yet it was to our tiny speck of a planet that God chose to come and live amongst us. Jesus is our proof of the love God has for us.

In our reading we are reminded that however much we feel we feel that we are nothing – we actually have everything.

God loves us and knows us – and we – in our seemingly small ways have been given the power to do amazing things.

On Ash Wednesday we begin Lent – the Season to put ourselves right with God, with each other with ourselves and with our planet. As our reading says – to be reconciled.

It should not be about making ourselves miserable in a kind of religious sado-masochistic way. It is not about being deliberately gloomy but instead to reflect deeply. We are definitely more serious today than perhaps the pancake excitement you might have had yesterday – the traditional day to go a bit wild and for many around the world (when there are no pandemics to contend with) to have parties and festivals and carnivals.



Ash Wednesday is a serious day so that we can give ourselves the space and time to think and be mindful about who are we so that we can make a change to become more as God wants us to be – to become more aware of how we are beautiful, to become more loving, to be more amazing, to be reconciled.

Our ash or whatever we use today to mark the sign of the cross on our bodies – like us – this ash or felt tip or whatever is stardust.

Rather brilliantly - we are part of a holy adventure as we seek to reflect God's love in this universe of billions of years and billions of galaxies.

May we make for ourselves the sign of the cross today as a symbol of a desire to be more reconciled to God, and however we choose to find that reconciliation, may we do so knowing our beauty and that we are loved. Amen



Liturgy of Penitence

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

God the Father,

Have mercy on us.

God the Son,

Have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit,

Have mercy on us.

Trinity of love,

Have mercy on us.

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.

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.

Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you, Lord all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.



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

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.

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.

Accept our repentance, Lord.

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

Accept our repentance, Lord.

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

Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
That we may show your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
**Bring us with all your saints
to the joy of his resurrection.**

**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.**

Imposing Ash – marking the Sign of the Cross

Dear friends in Christ, I invite you to receive ash as a sign of the spirit of penitence with which we shall keep this season of Lent. God our Father, you create us from the dust of the earth: grant that our 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.

Amen.



Make the sign of the cross (with ash or whatever else you can creatively use) and say these words:

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

The Absolution

May the Lord enrich us with his grace,
and nourish us with his blessing;
may the Lord defend us in trouble
and keep us from all evil;
may the Lord accept our prayers,
and absolve us from our offences,
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Amen.

Prayers followed by the Lord's Prayer

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

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

For Thine is the Kingdom

The power and the glory

For ever and ever.

Amen.

Peace

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you

And also with you.

The Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

May Christ give us grace to grow in holiness, to deny ourselves, take up our 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.

Amen.

The Dismissal

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.