

## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

### **A READING FROM THE PSALMS – A Prayer for Forgiveness**

#### **PSALMS 51:1-17**

Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away me sins! Wash away all my evil and make me clean from m sin!

I recognize my faults; I am always conscious of my sins. I have sinned against you-only against you – and done what you consider evil. So you are right in judging me, you are justified in condemning me. I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful.

Sincerity and truth are what you require; fill my mind with your wisdom. Remove my sin and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness; and though you have crushed me and broken me, I will be happy once again. Close your eyes to my sins and wipe out all my evil.

Create a pure heart in me, O God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me. Do not banish me from your presence; do not take your holy spirit away from me. Give me again the joy that comes from your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach sinners your commands, and they will turn back to you.

Spare my life, O God, and save me, and I will gladly proclaim our righteousness. Help me to speak, Lord, and I will praise you.

You do not want sacrifices, or I would offer them; you are not pleased with burnt offerings. My sacrifice is a humble spirit, O God; you will not reject a humble and repentant heart.

### **A READING FROM THE EPISTLES – Friendship with God through Christ**

#### **2 CORINTHIANS 5:20-6:10**

Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.

In our work together with God, then, we beg you who have received God's grace not to let it be wasted. Hear what God says:

“When the time came for me to show you favor, I heard you; when the day arrived for me to save you, I helped you.”

Listen! This is the hour to receive God’s favor; today is the day to be saved! We do not want anyone to find fault with our work, so we try not to put obstacles in anyone’s way. Instead, in everything we do we show that we are God’s servants by patiently enduring troubles, hardships, and difficulties. We have been beaten, jailed, and mobbed; we have been overworked and have gone without sleep or food. By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God’s servants – by the *Holy Spirit*, by our true love, by our message of truth, and by the power of God. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves. We are honored and disgraced; we are insulted and praised. We are treated as liars, yet we speak the truth; as unknown, yet we are known by all; as though we were dead, but as you see, we live on. Although punished, we are not killed; although saddened, we are not always glad; we seem poor, but we make many people rich; we seem to have nothing, yet we really possess everything.

**PRAYER FOR CLEANSING:** (unison)

**Loving and forgiving God, on this Ash Wednesday, we come before you filled with earthly sins and burdens. You have said you desire that we come to you to unburden our souls. And so we have come to you, leaving the burdens that separate us from you...with you. We have confessed our need of your forgiveness and as we prepare our hearts to make room for your amazing grace, we leave these things with you. As you receive these things, O Lord, grant us the courage to leave them with you and not take them back. Grant that we may trust you to receive, take care of, and manage these burdens, leaving us free to serve you more fully.**

**As we begin our Lenten journeys, O God, we begin by acknowledging our need for your mercy. Blot out our transgressions, wash us thoroughly, and cleanse us of our sins. Prepare us for the miracle of Easter. These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior. Amen.**

**RITUAL OF GIVING OUR BURDENS TO GOD  
& IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

Through the Grace of God  
we are cleansed!