



# Celebrate

Ash Wednesday  
March 5, 2025

*On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.*

## Prayer of the Day

---

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

---

*Because of the coming day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community declares that God is gracious and asks God to spare the people lest the nations doubt God's power to save.*

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—  
<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says the LORD,  
    return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with  
    mourning;  
<sup>13</sup>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.  
<sup>14</sup>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?

<sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
    sanctify a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;  
    <sup>16</sup>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.

<sup>17</sup>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?’”



Have mer - cy on me, O God, ac - cord - ing to your stead - fast love.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your <sup>1</sup> steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out <sup>1</sup> my offenses.

<sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through <sup>1</sup> from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me <sup>1</sup> from my sin.**

<sup>3</sup>For I know <sup>1</sup> my offenses,  
and my sin is ev- <sup>1</sup> er before me.

<sup>4</sup>**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil <sup>1</sup> in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right <sup>1</sup> in your judgment. R**

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born <sup>1</sup> steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my <sup>1</sup> mother's womb.

<sup>6</sup>**Indeed, you delight in truth <sup>1</sup> deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom <sup>1</sup> deep within.**

<sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I <sup>1</sup> shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be pur- <sup>1</sup> er than snow.

<sup>8</sup>**Let me hear <sup>1</sup> joy and gladness,  
that the body you have broken <sup>1</sup> may rejoice. R**

<sup>9</sup>Hide your face <sup>1</sup> from my sins,  
and blot out <sup>1</sup> all my wickedness.

<sup>10</sup>**Create in me a clean <sup>1</sup> heart, O God,  
and renew a right spir- <sup>1</sup> it within me.**

<sup>11</sup>Cast me not away <sup>1</sup> from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spir- <sup>1</sup> it from me.

<sup>12</sup>**Restore to me the joy of <sup>1</sup> your salvation  
and sustain me with your boun- <sup>1</sup> tiful Spirit. R**

<sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways <sup>1</sup> to offenders,  
and sinners shall be re- <sup>1</sup> stored to you.

<sup>14</sup>**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of <sup>1</sup> my salvation,  
and my tongue shall sing <sup>1</sup> of your righteousness.**

<sup>15</sup>O Lord, o- <sup>1</sup> pen my lips,  
and my mouth shall pro- <sup>1</sup> claim your praise.

<sup>16</sup>**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or <sup>1</sup> I would give it.  
You are not pleased <sup>1</sup> with burnt offering.**

<sup>17</sup>The sacrifice of God is a <sup>1</sup> troubled spirit;  
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will <sup>1</sup> not despise. R

*Shortly after the return of Israel from exile in Babylon, the people were troubled by the ineffectiveness of their fasts. God reminds them that outward observance is no substitute for genuine fasting that results in acts of justice, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked. Sincere repentance will lead to a dramatic improvement of their condition.*

## Second Reading

## 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

*The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.*

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>6:1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>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! <sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves

in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

## Gospel

## Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] “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.

<sup>2</sup>“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. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“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. <sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>16</sup>“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. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>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.

<sup>19</sup>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

## Prayers of Intercession

---

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*A brief silence.*

God of our journeys, we pray for the church as the season of Lent begins. Guide your people in spiritual practices and preparation for baptism. Strengthen communities of faith in discipleship and witness for the sake of the gospel. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of creation, we pray for the earth. As you once brought forth life from the dust, breathe healing and renewal into all places where ecosystems are stretched and strained. Nurture organic cycles of life, death, and rebirth. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of the nations, we pray for an end to wars and occupations that reduce communities to ash. Turn leaders away from fearful decision-making, and lead all people into the justice and compassion of your reign. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of the suffering, we pray for all who live with any pain (*especially*). Comfort people living with chronic or terminal illnesses, addictions, or anxiety. Grant that all who dwell in the dust of grief may know your presence there. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of community, we pray for those who accompany the dying: for first responders, health care and hospice workers, chaplains, and those who facilitate burials of the dead. Sustain them as they serve their neighbors in life and death with dignity and care. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God of the cross, we give thanks for those who have completed their lives on earth and have returned to you. Strengthen us with the promise that within the ashes of death are the seeds of resurrection life. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.  
**Amen.**

---

## Preparing for Next Week

**Thursday** Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16. **Friday** (commemoration of Perpetua and Felicity and companions, martyrs at Carthage, 202) Exodus 6:1-13. **Saturday** Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. **First Sunday in Lent** Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13.

---

**CELEBRATE** March 5, 2025

Volume 56, Number 2

---

CELEBRATE (ISSN 1083-3242, USPS 783-460) is published quarterly by Augsburg Fortress, 411 Washington Avenue North, Third Floor, Minneapolis, MN, 55401. Periodicals postage paid in St. Paul, MN and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Celebrate, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, P.O. Box 1553, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1553. Printed in U.S.A. Price per weekly part \$5.79 per 100 copies; price in Canada subject to exchange rates. Minimum order 50 copies of each issue; all orders must be in multiples of 50. Copyright © 2025 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Readings from New Revised Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Prayer of the day, psalm, and readings during the week from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Refrain music by May Schwarz. Refrain accompaniment is in *Psalter for Worship, Year C* (Augsburg Fortress, 2006). Please visit our website at [augsburgfortress.org](http://augsburgfortress.org). Lectionary year C.  
CELEBRATE is protected through trademark registration in the U.S.A. and Canada.

ITEM013301 Tracks 1 and 2