

This service may be led by a lay person in the absence of clergy.

The Invitation to a Holy Lent

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.

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. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

The people are invited to kneel, as able, for a time of silence and prayer.

Psalm 51 is read *The people remain kneeling, as able.*

The Collect

The Officiant and People remain kneeling, as able, for the collect.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

The Imposition of Ashes

The priest may offer prayer upon the ashes (BCP 265). It is not necessary that a blessing upon the ashes be offered.

The People are invited forward, maintaining physical distance, to receive the imposition of ashes. The Officiant will impose the ashes on the crown of the head, shaking the ashes upon the penitent, while saying "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." It is appropriate for the People to respond with, "Amen."

The people return to their seats for the prayers.

A Prayer of Penitence

The Officiant and People together, all kneeling, as able

Most holy and merciful Father: We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done and for our lack of charity toward the oppressed. Restore us, and accomplish in us the work of your salvation, that we may show forth your glory in the world. *Amen.*

The Officiant, remaining kneeling with the People, says

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live: grant us true repentance; fill us with Your Holy Spirit, so that what we do on this day, and for the rest of our life hereafter, may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to Your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The service has ended. The people leave in silence, following the officiant(s).