

# Ash Wednesday

Cycle C | March 5, 2025

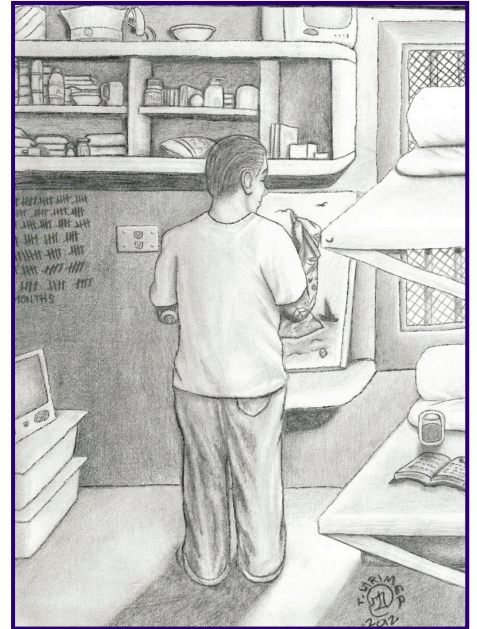
## INTRODUCTION

Today Lent begins, the time to put off our masks and to turn our face and heart to God and to people. In this holy season, we reflect on the true meaning of our lives. Who am I and what am I living for? Am I living for God and the community? We shall be invited to receive ashes on our foreheads with the invitation, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel." Away, then, with all masks and return to God, to your true self and to one another as God's people.

## WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

Jesus, during Lent, I promise to practice being more patient with those around me. I promise to be more patient with myself. I promise to continue my daily prayers to strengthen my relationship with you. I promise to practice meditation to build a stronger connection with myself, as well as a stronger connection with you. A true and strong connection with God and myself is the only way to know what forgiveness is. Forgiveness will be one, if not the most important thing for me, as I fall short or fail in my attempts to be patient. I will need to be able to forgive myself. There will be times I'll need the forgiveness of others when I am not patient with them. Then, I am going to need to be forgiven by God in order to find the strength to move forward. During this Lent, I will practice changing my impulsive thoughts and behaviors. I promise to be more patient and understanding. I pray in the name of Jesus that I will continue to find peace and patience in this fast-paced world. It is only with you, Jesus, that I will succeed in changing my impulsive ways and become more patient.

**-Brent, who is in a California State Prison.**



*"Marking the days of Lent"*  
by T. Larimer.

## OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:

Lord,

As we enter the Lenten Season, help us change the things in our life that lead us to death and darkness. Help us see your light through those around us and forgive those who have hurt us.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**



# LITURGY OF THE WORD

## First Reading: Joel 2:12-18

Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment. Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind him a blessing, Offerings and libations for the LORD, your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion! proclaim a fast, call an assembly; Gather the people, notify the congregation; Assemble the elders, gather the children and the infants at the breast; Let the bridegroom quit his room and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep, And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people, and make not your heritage a reproach, with the nations ruling over them! Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people.

The Word of the Lord.

**R. Thanks be to God.**



## Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 51

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;  
in the greatness of your compassion  
wipe out my offense.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

For I acknowledge my offense,  
and my sin is before me always:  
"Against you only have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight."

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

A clean heart create for me, O God,  
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.  
Cast me not out from your presence,  
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

## Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**



# MEDITATION: CHANGE

*(from the eyes of Peter)*

it was a hot day  
sweat was pouring  
down my face  
so many people  
had traveled  
to the flowing river  
the jordan was ready  
to receive so many

i was watching  
so many people  
waiting to enter  
the water  
looking at  
what happens  
when the people  
leave the water  
what does it mean  
to be transformed  
to change?  
what happens  
within any of us  
who want to live  
a new life?

i was listening to  
what john was saying  
to the crowds:  
if you use violence  
in words or in acts  
*change*

some will go home  
transformed  
while others will  
remain the same  
what is it that  
makes us change?

do we decide  
to change  
with the mind?  
do we one day  
wake up and change?

is it when we see  
what we have done  
by our actions?  
is it when we have  
nowhere else to turn?

john continued to  
speak to the crowds:  
*change your ways  
look at your life  
how do you need  
to change?  
do not change  
for one day because  
you are suffering  
change your ways*

jesus was showing me  
a young girl who  
was walking alone  
to the river  
all her life  
she had been abused  
and suffered greatly  
for a long time  
but one day  
she was walking  
under the stars  
late at night and  
a presence  
overtook her  
she knew she was  
in the presence of god  
her whole being  
felt this

the following week  
she began to open up  
her heart  
to pray deeply

today she is walking  
to the river to tell god  
that she really wants  
to change

change really has  
something to do  
with a relationship  
with the connection  
and love that is birthed  
from the relationship  
this is what lets us change

listening to john again:  
*open your hearts  
do not be afraid  
if you are attached  
to any darkness  
let go  
change your behavior  
if you are not walking  
in the light  
change your ways*

listening to john's voice  
getting louder:  
*don't sell your souls  
be careful with  
who you are following  
do not be slaves  
to darkness  
you need to be freed  
it will not be easy*

seeing this  
from the hillside  
i watched the girl  
jesus pointed out to me  
i could hear her saying  
jesus  
i will change  
i will no longer dedicate  
my life to acts of death  
for revenge and hate  
i choose life  
and she walked to  
the middle of the river  
where john  
immersed her  
when she emerged

her face was radiant  
she had made  
the decision to change  
never again  
would she return  
to her old ways  
with this attitude  
she could find real  
genuine love in her life

and i too was ready  
to free myself of  
ways of darkness  
after that afternoon  
being with jesus  
and listening to john  
talk about change  
i needed to stop  
judging others by race  
by the color of their skin  
i do not want to  
make fun of  
another person

i realized  
we are equally loved  
by our god  
how wrong it is to  
look down on another  
because of their  
race or class  
i realized how  
i needed to never again  
be violent against others

i know that by  
having this relationship  
with jesus  
it was giving me  
the strength  
to change  
at my deepest center



**REFLECTION:** Lent is a time for change. A time when we look closely at our life and choose the things that give us life rather than the things that destroy us. What are the things that I want to change in my life over the next 40 days? Jesus, during Lent, I promise to...

### **BLESSING OF THE ASHES**

The ashes used today come from the branches blessed last year for Palm Sunday — palms that were waved in victory and praise.

**Lord,**  
**Bless these ashes by which we show that we are dust. Pardon our sins and keep us faithful to the journey of Lent.**

**Let this sign that we place on our foreheads open our hearts and heal our broken relationships. Amen.**

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Let us pray:  
Lord,  
Change is hard. Give us the courage and strength to resist temptation as we walk with you during the next forty days.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.  
**R. Amen.**

### **DISPOSITION OF ASHES**

*Remember God's love and change your ways.*

We leave the ashes on our foreheads until they wear off naturally. They are a public witness to those things our society does not wish to embrace: the reality of death, penance for sin, and the hope of resurrection in Our Lord, Jesus Christ.



*“Ash Wednesday” by José who was in juvenile hall.*

