



**February 14, 2024  
Ash Wednesday  
6:30 p.m.**

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***St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, ELCA***

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## WELCOME

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Blessed be the Holy Trinity † one God, who journeys with us these forty days, and sustains us with the gift of grace.

**Amen.**

### OPENING DIALOGUE

We come to worship God as the Lenten season begins, aware of our frailty and our failings.

**We come seeking God's mercy, acknowledging our mortality.**

Having received the waters of baptism, we are now marked with ashes.

**The treasures of this earth do not last; our treasure is in heaven, our heart's true home.**

**Amen.**

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

God desires truth in our inward being, receiving us as we are, broken and flawed. Seeking God's mercy, let us confess our sins before God.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Eternal God,

**We have broken our relationship with you, in ways too numerous to count. We hold onto earthly treasures and desires. We sin against our neighbors and we quarrel with one another. Forgive us, we pray, for we are broken in spirit. Keep us always in your presence so that we may be restored to the joy of your salvation. In Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen**

God's beloved, hear the good news. God breathed life into dust, creating the breath of life. God created you, and breathed breath into your lungs. God is continually creating all things new and pouring out forgiveness; in the name of Jesus † Christ your sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**



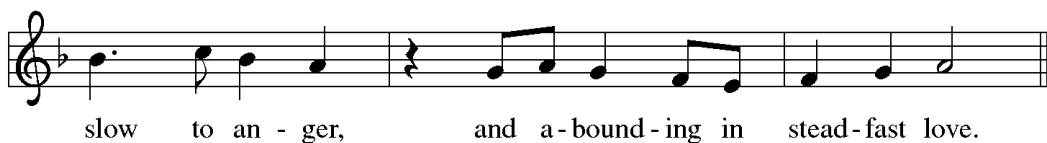
## **WILL YOU MEET US?** *By Jan Richardson*

Will you meet us in the ashes,  
will you meet us in the ache  
and show your face within our sorrow  
and offer us your word of grace:

that you are life within the dying,  
that you abide within the dust,  
that you are what survives the burning,  
that you arise to make us new.

And in our aching, you are breathing;  
and in our weeping, you are here  
within the hands that bear your blessing,  
enfolding us within your love. Amen.

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



## **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>“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.”

The Gospel of The Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON**

## Bless Now, O God, the Journey

1 Bless now, O God, the jour - ney that all your peo - ple make,  
 2 Bless so - journ - ers and pil - grims who share this wind - ing way;  
 3 Di - vine e - ter - nal lov - er, you meet us on the road.

the path through noise and si - lence, the way of give and take.  
 your hope burns through the ter - rors, your love sus - tains the day.  
 We wait for lands of prom - ise where milk and hon - ey flow,

The trail is found in des - ert and winds the moun - tain round,  
 We yearn for ho - ly free - dom while of - ten we are bound;  
 but wait - ing not for plac - es, you meet us all a - round.

then leads be - side still wa - ters, the road where faith is found.  
 to - geth - er we are seek - ing the road where faith is found.  
 Our cov - e - nant is writ - ten on roads, as faith is found.

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993  
 Music: LLANGLOFFAN, Welsh tune, 19th cent.  
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## **BLESSING THE DUST** *By Jan Richardson*

All those days you felt like dust, like dirt,  
as if all you had to do was turn your face toward the wind  
and be scattered to the four corners

or swept away by the smallest breath as insubstantial—  
did you not know what the Holy One can do with dust?

This is the day we freely say we are scorched.  
This is the hour we are marked  
by what has made it through the burning.

This is the moment we ask for the blessing  
that lives within the ancient ashes,  
that makes its home inside the soil of this sacred earth.

So let us be marked not for sorrow.  
And let us be marked not for shame.  
Let us be marked not for false humility  
or for thinking we are less than we are

but for claiming what God can do  
within the dust, within the dirt  
within the stuff of which the world is made  
and the stars that blaze in our bones  
and the galaxies that spiral  
inside the smudge we bear. Amen.

## **IMPOSITION OF THE ASHES**

**Remember: You are dust, and to dust you shall return.**

*All are welcome to come forward and receive the ashes. They are a reminder of the fleetingness of life, and our own mortality. As we open the deepest corners of our hearts before God, we see God's grace, forgiveness, and love in the shape of the cross of ashes. Harkening back to the cross we receive at baptism, when we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. A promise of forgiveness, love, and everlasting life, birthed from the Divine Mystery of Christ's crucifixion. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Return to God with all your heart.*



## **INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

The God who speaks and summons the earth into being now speaks to us, calling us to offer of ourselves.



## Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful

### *Offering Song*

Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that  
we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of  
all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble  
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980  
Music: Ronald A. Nelson, b. 1927  
Text and music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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### **OFFERING PRAYER**

Gracious God,

Our treasures come only from you. It is only through your goodness, that we have received so much. We came into this life with nothing, and we leave the same way. Guide us, and inspire us, to share ourselves and the resources we have. May these offerings be used for the goodness of your creation.

**Amen.**

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING DIALOGUE**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

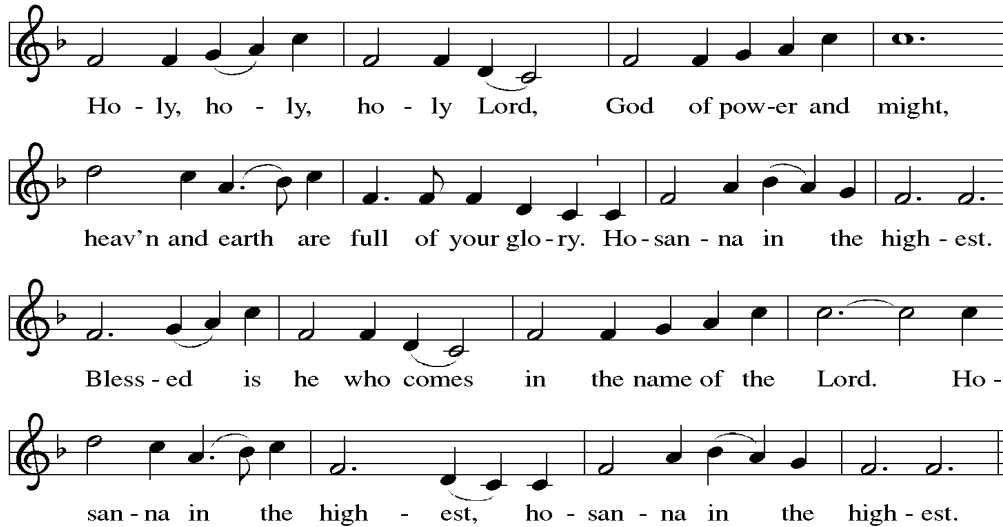
**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

## PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,  
heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.  
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

### LORD'S PRAYER

**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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to Christ's table; here you will find bread for the journey. Come to the banquet, here you will find a feast for hungry hearts. Come to our Lord; who forgives, sustains, and restores. Amen.



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the



sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

## Just As I Am, without One Plea

The musical score is written in a three-system format. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are arranged in four lines, with the first line containing four numbered verses. The music features a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with some chords and rests. The piano accompaniment is primarily chordal, with some moving lines in the bass.

1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was  
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y\_a con - flict,  
3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,  
4 Just as I am; thy love un - known has bro - ken ev - 'ry

shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
man - y\_a doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,  
cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,  
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,

O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1789–1871  
Music: WOODWORTH, William B. Bradbury, 1816–1868

## For the Bread Which You Have Broken

1 For the bread which you have bro - ken, for the wine which you have poured,  
2 By this prom - ise that you love us, by your gift of peace re - stored,  
3 With the saints who now a - dore you, seat-ed at the heav'n - ly board,  
4 In your ser - vice, Lord, de - fend us; in our hearts keep watch and ward;

for the words which you have spo - ken, now we give you thanks, O Lord.  
by your call to heav'n a - bove us, hal - low all our lives, O Lord.  
may the church still wait - ing for you keep love's tie un - bro - ken, Lord.  
in the world to which you send us let your king - dom come, O Lord.

The musical score consists of two systems. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The first system contains four lines of lyrics, and the second system contains four lines of lyrics. The piano accompaniment features chords and moving lines in the bass.

Text: Louis F. Benson, 1855–1930, alt.

Music: OMNI DIE, *Gross Catolisch Gesangbuch*, Nürnberg, 1631; arr. William Smith Rockstro, 1823–1895

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### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Embodied God,

At your table, we have tasted the goodness of Jesus. With the eyes of our hearts open to your promise, empower us to hear the needs of our neighbors and touch the world with your love.

**Amen.**

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**BLESSING**

May God wrap you in love each night, providing you peace and rest,  
And while you sleep may God weave strength & courage into every breath.  
May you meet the morning with resilient vigor, ready for come what may,  
And may the light of Christ fill your heart with joy every single day.  
May the Spirit shine on you with favor, love, and never-ending grace  
And may the Three In ✝ One, bless you on this Lenten journey,  
And in every single place.

**Amen.**

# I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
 2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with  
 3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me; I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
 in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with  
 when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me; all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,  
 when my heart is al - most break - ing,  
 when my head is bowed in sor - row,

Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.  
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me, walk with me.  
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

Text: African American spiritual  
 Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual, arr. hymnal version  
 Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

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## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve in love.

**Thanks be to God.**

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*Craving more information about Ash Wednesday? This is for you.*

**Reflections on Ash Wednesday Worship (taken in parts from)**

<https://blogs.elca.org/worship/3266/>

Repentance is at the core of Christian living (the first of Luther's 95 Theses). During the season of Lent, we all become a "penitent" with ashes on the forehead, looking toward to the cross as a sign of God's reconciliation with all creation (with the absolution on Maundy Thursday). Ashes appear throughout the Hebrew Bible as a sign of mourning and repentance, but Isaiah reminds us that such practices point to the larger call for justice (Isa. 58:5-6). These ashes are at the very beginning ("dust" in Genesis 3:19) and connect each of us to all of creation and to our own mortality.

Lent is a time of: "self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love." It is not enough to just remember that "we are dust, and to dust we shall return." As ones marked as Christ's own children, we heed the call to repent, to 'turn around.'

The power of receiving the cross on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday is in the layering: there is a sign of sin and death traced and layered on top of the tracing in water and oil of the promise of life, rebirth, and liberation from sin and death. On Ash Wednesday, we feel the full weight of the ashy tracing. It does not negate or obliterate the liberating sign it is layered with, but it is a suitably tangible reminder of the reality of grief, loss, and death.

Ash Wednesday is such a powerful experience because we experience it physically. Even when our minds are not fully able to understand the scope of what is to come, when our spirits reject the pain of Jesus' last days, our bodies remember. Wearing the cross of ashes as a bodily exercise is Jesus meeting us in our body's anxiety and sadness and being with us there.

Reflection Questions:

- What rituals, symbols, or actions can help us confront the fragile beauty of these brief, powerful moments of life?
- How can we remember that we are called to journey with Jesus and pray with him over the next 40 days, knowing what is to come?

*Our minds may not have the answer, but our bodies carry ancient wisdom.*