

CHURCH OF TE HEPARA PAI

Wednesday 18 February 2015

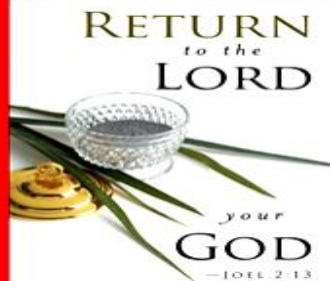
Te Wenerei Pungarehu / Ash Wednesday

SELF DENIAL



ASH

WEDNESDAY



SENTENCE OF THE DAY:

Return to the Lord your God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. (Joel 2:13)

COLLECT OF THE DAY – *Let us pray:*

Righteous God, in humility and repentance we bring our failures in caring, helping, and loving; we bring the pain we have caused others; we bring the injustice in society of which we are a part; to the transforming power of your grace. Grant us the courage to accept the healing you offer and to turn again toward the sunrise of your reign, that we may walk with you in the promise of peace you have willed for all the children of the earth, and have made known to us in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

Ash Wednesday

On this first day of Lent, we receive ashes in the form of a cross on our forehead and are reminded to 'turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.' In receiving ashes, we embrace Jesus' journey: the cross of suffering and the promise of Resurrection. We are marked as believers, as sinners, as people in need of Christ's forgiveness and salvation.

Talk about it

After receiving ashes, talk about what each member of the family is giving up for Lent this year.

What sin can you focus on? What can you give up?
What faith habit can you add?

ASH WEDNESDAY

REMEMBER.
REPENT.
RETURN.

What is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday marks the first day, or the start of the **Season of Lent**, which begins **40 days** prior to Easter (Sundays are not included in the count).

Lent is a time when many Christians prepare for Easter by observing a period of prayer, fasting, repentance (turning away from sin), Scripture reading, giving, moderation (restraint or self control) and spiritual discipline (such as ensuring they have a time of personal devotion to God each day; and making a decision to do something such as visit a sick or elderly person once a week). [*A more detailed account of what Lent is will be provided on the Service Sheet for the First Sunday in Lent*]. During **Ash Wednesday services**, the minister will lightly rub the sign of the cross with ashes onto the foreheads of worshipers as a sign of sorrow for and repentance from sin against God on the part of each worshiper. It is from the practice of doing this that Ash Wednesday gets its name.

The ashes are made by the priest burning the palm crosses that have been kept from last year's Palm Sunday and then mixing the ashes of these crosses with holy water (which has been blessed) to make a greyish paste. When people go to church on Ash Wednesday, the priest dips his thumb in the paste and uses it to make the sign of the cross on each person's forehead. As Palm Sunday celebrates Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when the crosses used in the last year's Palm Sunday service are converted to ashes, worshippers are reminded that defeat and crucifixion quickly followed triumph. Using ashes to mark the cross on the believer's forehead symbolises that through Christ's death and rising from the dead, all Christians can be free from sin.

The Bible does not mention Ash Wednesday or the custom of Lent. However, the practice of repentance and mourning in ashes is found in many places in the Bible such as Daniel 9:3 and Matthew 11:21.

You are invited in Lent to use the **40 days** from Ash Wednesday today to deepen your faith and commitment to the way of God in Christ.



The Old Testament Reading: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

A reading from Joel chapter 2 beginning at verse 1.

The LORD Sends an Army of Locusts


¹ Priests, blow the trumpets in Zion. Give a warning on my holy mountain. Let everyone who lives in the land tremble with fear. The day of the LORD is coming. It is very near. ² That day will be dark and sad. It will be black and cloudy. A huge army of locusts is coming. They will spread across the mountains like the sun when it rises. There has never been an army like it. And there will never be another for all time to come.

Let Your Hearts Be Broken

¹² The Lord announces to his people, "Return to me with all your heart. There is still time. Do not eat any food. Sob and cry." ¹³ Don't just tear your clothes to show how sad you are. Let your hearts be broken. Return to the LORD your God. He is gracious. He is tender and kind. He is slow to get angry. He is full of love. He takes pity on you. He won't destroy you. ¹⁴ Who knows? He might turn toward you and have pity on you. He might even give you his blessing. Then you can bring grain offerings and drink offerings to the LORD your God.

¹⁵ Priests, blow the trumpets in Zion. Announce a holy fast. Tell the people not to eat anything. Gather them together for a special service. ¹⁶ Bring them together. Set all of them apart to me. Bring together the elders. Gather the children and the babies who are still nursing. Let the groom leave his bedroom. Let the bride leave their marriage bed. ¹⁷ Let the priests who serve the LORD sob. Let them cry between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, "LORD, spare your people. Don't let others make fun of them. Don't let the nations laugh at them. Don't let them tease your people and say, "Where is their God?""

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Thanks be to God.

The Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

A reading from 2 Corinthians chapter 5 beginning at verse 20b.

²⁰ Here is what Christ wants us to beg you to do. Come back to God!
²¹ Christ didn't have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us.
¹ We work together with God. So we are asking you not to receive God's grace and then do nothing with it. ² He says, "When I showed you my favour, I heard you. On the day I saved you, I helped you." (Isaiah 49:8)
³ We don't put anything in anyone's way. So no one can find fault with our work for God. ⁴ Instead, we make it clear that we serve God in every way. We serve him by holding steady. We stand firm in all kinds of trouble, hard times and suffering.

⁵ We don't give up when we are beaten or put in prison. When people stir up trouble in the streets, we continue to serve God. We work hard for him. We go without sleep and food. ⁶ We remain pure. We understand completely what it means to serve God. We are patient and kind. We serve him in the power of the Holy Spirit. We serve him with true love. ⁷ We speak the truth. We serve in the power of God. We hold the weapons of godliness in the right hand and in the left. ⁸ We serve God in times of glory and shame. We serve him whether the news about us is bad or good. We are true to our calling. But people treat us as if we were pretenders. ⁹ We are known, but people treat us as if we were unknown. We are dying, but we continue to live. We are beaten, but we are not killed. ¹⁰ We are sad, but we are always full of joy. We are poor, but we make many people rich. We have nothing, but we own everything. *Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Thanks be to God.*

The Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Lent
2015



The Holy Gospel according to Matthew chapter 6 beginning at verse 1.

Praise and Glory to God.

Giving to Needy People

¹ "Be careful not to do 'good works' in front of others. Don't do them to be seen by others. If you do, your Father in heaven will not reward you.

² "When you give to needy people, do not announce it by having trumpets blown. Do not be like those who only pretend to be holy. They announce what they do in the synagogues and on the streets. They want to be honoured by others. What I'm about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward.

³ "When you give to the needy, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴ Then your giving will be done secretly. Your Father will reward you. He sees what you do secretly.

Prayer

⁵ "When you pray, do not be like those who only pretend to be holy. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners. They want to be seen by others. What I'm about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward.

⁶ "When you pray, go into your room. Close the door and pray to your Father, who can't be seen. He will reward you. Your Father sees what is done secretly.

Fasting

¹⁶ "When you go without eating, do not look gloomy like those who only pretend to be holy. They make their faces very sad. They want to show people they are fasting. What I'm about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward.

¹⁷ "But when you go without eating, put olive oil on your head. Wash your face.

¹⁸ Then others will not know that you are fasting. Only your Father, who can't be seen, will know it. He will reward you. Your Father sees what is done secretly.

Put Away Riches in Heaven

¹⁹ "Do not put away riches for yourselves on earth. Moths and rust can destroy them. Thieves can break in and steal them. ²⁰ Instead, put away riches for yourselves in heaven. There, moths and rust do not destroy them. There, thieves do not break in and steal them. ²¹ Your heart will be where your riches are.

This is the Gospel of Christ. Praise to Christ, the Word.