

## ASH WEDNESDAY

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### THE COLLECT

Holy God,  
our lives are laid open before you:  
rescue us from the chaos of sin  
and through the death of your Son  
bring us healing and make us whole  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

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### FIRST READING (Joel 2 v 1-2, 12-17)

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—  
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.

Yet even now, says the Lord,  
    return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
    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.  
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?

Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
    sanctify a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;  
    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.

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?” ’

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### GOSPEL (Matthew 6 v 1-6, 16-21)

Jesus said to the disciples,  
‘Beware of practising your piety before others in  
order to be seen by them; for then you have no  
reward from your Father in heaven.

‘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. But when you give alms, do  
not let your left hand know what your right hand is  
doing, so that your alms may be done in secret;  
and your Father who sees in secret will reward  
you.

‘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. 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.

‘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. But when  
you fast, put oil on your head and wash your  
face, 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.

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,  
where moth and rust consume and where thieves  
break in and steal; but store up for yourselves  
treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor  
rust consumes and where thieves do not break in  
and steal. For where your treasure is, there your  
heart will be also.