

Rend Your Heart

A blessing for Ash Wednesday by Jan Richardson

To receive this blessing,
all you have to do is let your heart break.
Let it crack open.
Let it all apart so you can see its secret chambers,
the hidden spaces where you have hesitated to go.
Your entire life is here, inscribed whole upon your heart's walls:
every path taken or left behind,
every face you turned toward or turned away,
every word spoken in love or in rage,
every line of your life you would prefer to leave in shadow,
every story that shimmers with treasures known
and those you have yet to find.
It could take you days to wander these rooms.
Forty, at least.
And so let this be a season for wandering,
for trusting the breaking,
for tracing the rupture that will return you
to the One who waits,
who watches,
who works within the rending
to make your heart whole.



Ash Wednesday Cross, Jan Richardson

I felt like the little donkey when
his burden is finally lifted. Things!
Burn them, burn them! Make a beautiful
fire! More room in your heart for love,
for the trees! For the birds who own
nothing—the reason they can fly.

+ Mary Oliver

First Baptist Church on Fifth, Winston-Salem

ASH WEDNESDAY

March 5, 2025 • 6:00 PM

Lent begins with a solemn call to fasting and repentance as we begin our forty-day journey to Easter. During this season the people of God are called to reflect on the meaning of their relationship with Christ — his life, death, and resurrection. The sign of ashes suggests our human mortality and frailty. But what seems like an ending is really an invitation to return to God. With the cross on our brow, we set our hearts on the spiritual renewal made possible through the Good News of Easter, awaiting us at the end of this holy season.

PRELUDE: *Op. 122, V. Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele (adorn yourself, o dear soul)*

J. Brahms

Jacob Hill, Organ

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Emily Hull McGee

CALL TO WORSHIP: Joel 2: 12-13, 15-16

Amy McClure

Leader: 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.

**All: Let us return to the Lord, our God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.**

Leader: Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast;

All: Call a solemn assembly; gather the people in silence.

(A silence is kept.)

*HYMN 471: *Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*

RESTORATION

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SANCTUARY

RESPONSE: *My Prayers Rise Like Incense*

A. Duba



PRAYER OF CONFESSION: Psalm 51: 1-17

Kyle Caudle

Leader: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, God will not despise.
Let us confess our sins to the God
whose promise to forgive and restore us is sure.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

Leader: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

**All: Against you, and you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.**

Leader: Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

**All: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.**

Leader: Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

**All: Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.**

Leader: Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

**All: O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.**

Leader: For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

**All: The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

Leader: Amen.

All: Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-21

Mary Kaylor

Leader: We beg you as Christ's representatives,
"Be reconciled to God!"
God caused the one who didn't know sin
to be sin for our sake so that through him
we could become the righteousness of God.

This is good news!
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOMILY: "Clear Out Your Heart"

Emily Hull McGee

IMPOSITION OF ASHES AND CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

HYMN OF RESPONSE 168: *I Take the Cross of Jesus Christ

KINGSFOLD

***BENEDICTION**

Emily Hull McGee

(Please depart in silence.)

*Those who are able will please stand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Clear Out

Worship during Lent at First on Fifth

God is a clearing God, one who wants nothing to separate, get in the way, hinder the relationship we share. Yet in our relationships with God and each other, we pile the blockades high. We crowd ourselves with stuff, with opinions, with fears, with distractions. We fence off our trauma, defend our needs, and leave our relationships full of debris. Yet the season of Lent gifts us the chance to declutter our lives, to clear out and strip away and lay bare what obstructs the Way of Life. As we come before the refiner's fire, it's in the clearing that we find what we truly long to hold, and discover the Love that never lets us go has been there all along.

March 9 | First Sunday of Lent

Clear Out Your Control

Luke 4:1-13

March 16 | Second Sunday of Lent

Clear Out Your Independence

Luke 13:31-35

March 23 | Third Sunday of Lent

Clear Out Your Impatience

Luke 13:1-9

March 30 | Fourth Sunday of Lent

Clear Out Your Shame

Luke 15:1-3b, 11b-32

April 6 | Fifth Sunday of Lent

Clear Out Your Caution

John 12:1-8

Communion Sunday

April 13 | Palm Sunday

Clear Out the Way

Luke 19:28-40

April 20 | Easter Sunday

Looking for the Living

Luke 24:1-12



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BOLD LOVE. BOUNDLESS COMPASSION.