

Pathways Retreat Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

Welcome

Gathering

We enter the season that begins with a smudge.
That smudge is a testimony to what survives.

It is a witness to what abides when everything seems lost.
It is a sign that what we know, and love may, for a time, may be reduced to dust, but it does not disappear.

We belong to the God who well knows what to do with dust,
who sees the dust as a place to dream anew, who creates from it again and again.

Life will continually lay us bare, sometimes with astonishing severity.
In the midst of this, we are invited to see what is most elemental in us, what endures:

The love that creates and animates, the love that cannot be destroyed;
the love that is most basic to who we are.

-Jan Richardson, *The Painted Prayerbook*



Prayer

Burying our Alleluias

Confessing with Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O Gracious One, according to your steadfast love;
According to your abundant kindness forgive me where my thoughts and deeds have hurt others.

Lead me in the paths of justice;
Guide my steps on paths of peace!

Teach me, that I may know my weaknesses, the shortcomings that bind me;
the unloving ways that separate me, that keep me from recognizing your Life in me.

For, I keep company with fear, and dwell in the house of ignorance;
yet, I was brought forth in love, and love is my birthright.

You have placed your truth in the inner being;
therefore, teach me the wisdom of the heart.

Forgive all that binds me in fear, that I might radiate love;
cleans me that your light might shine in me.

Fill me with gladness; help me to transform weakness into strength.
Look not on my past mistakes but on the aspirations of my heart.

Create in me a clean heart, O Gracious One, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Enfold me in the arms of Love and fill me with your Holy Spirit.

Restore in me the joy of your saving grace;
and encourage me with a new spirit.

-Nan Merrill, *Psalms for Praying*

Singing our Confession (Kyrie #412, Russian Orthodox)

Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy).

Christe Eleison (Christ, have mercy.)

Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy).

Readings

The bell rings for silence for meditation between each reading.

Meditation

Marking with Ashes

Affirmation

**We affirm that we are God's beloved creation,
lifted forth from the dust of the earth
and to the earth we will return.**

**We affirm that in our living and in our dying,
we belong to Christ;
we can never be lost,
only more and more found.**

**We affirm that in the Spirit's
resurrection power, we are called forth
and gently created anew. Amen.**

Sending

May the ashes we wear be the ashes of transformation.

From Love we come and to Love we return.

Thank be to God.