**Ash Wednesday, March 2, 2022**

*Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation!*

*Become an ambassador for Christ.”*

*(2 Corinthians 6:2, 5:20)*

**HELLOs and then Betty mutes everyone.**

**WELCOME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Beloved community – peace be with you!

Response: And also with you.

* Introduce any new people.
* Betty and I had the joy of preparing for this evening.
* Thank you to those who will lead us in music and prayer: Lynn Bufka, Reggie Ott, Jim De Quattro, Charlotte Cook, Anne Regan, and Bill Fanelli.
* This will be a quieter time as we enter this holy season.

**GATHERING PRAYER / SETTLING IN (Lynn Bufka)**

As we begin this Lent; we feel the despair in many people, and the enormity of the world’s ills. Let us begin in silence in solidarity with those affected by war and violence… famine… racism… climate upheaval… and tonight especially our sisters and brothers in Ukraine.

Jesus’ society was also full of ills. We set aside these 40 days to actively participate with Jesus in a journey – from the desert to the cross, and to resurrection. We ask what is ours to do and we commit to actions that call us deeper into becoming “ambassadors for Christ”. And so we pray: Holy One, may we fuel each other with imagination and courage and be good companions to one another on this journey. Amen.

I invite you to begin with quiet in your mind and heart. Get comfortable in your chair, feel its support. Take a deep breath and feel your breath flowing all through your body… in and out… deeper… in and out… softening tensions in your body… letting distractions flow out of you…. (Pause.) Now let’s settle into this time together, in our different places, by sharing a common breath…. to be here. And one to be together. And a deep one to make space for the Spirit to move in us.

**OPENING SONG**

**Come, Ye Disconsolate** by Roberta Flack and Donnie Hathaway

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmnnMHGvVJc**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmnnMHGvVJc) **(Betty –**

* Preset final slide image as profile pic.
* Preset link to play at 1.25 speed.
* Preset Share Screen: basic – share computer sound and NOT optimize video; advanced – play comput.er sound.
* When it’s time for music:Stop my camera.
* Start Share Screen (nothing will happen).
* Switch to music link, start song, fade starting at 2:06, ending at 2:10.
* Stop Share Screen.

Come, ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heav’n cannot heal.

**INTRODUCTION TO LENTEN THEME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Why do we set aside this time for Lent? For one thing, it’s a finite 40 days when something new might take root.

Last year we asked ourselves to change how we think of things; to put on the mind of God. This year the urgency of the world’s brokenness calls us to act, to heed Paul’s call that “Now is the acceptable time”.

Tonight we ask, “How do we bring on the day of salvation for all the children of God, for all the creatures of God, and for Earth itself?”

One path toward answering this question is to participate with Jesus during these 40 days. Not to watch Jesus, but to unite with Jesus. During these weeks, let us meet God as Jesus meets Abba. To know that God who is with Jesus in temptation is God of our own deserts. God who shines in Jesus in the Transfiguration is God of the transformation of each of us and of the Body of which we are a part. God who gives the fig tree more time to grow is God both of our own fruitfulness and of our own patience with others. God who celebrates the Prodigal Child is God for us when we forget the Holy One and then are welcomed as we return. God who brings Lazarus from death to life is God of us and of all who hope for new life.

These 40 days are, beyond all else, a time to trust that the Abba we share with Jesus is our companion at every step, till death and beyond.

Then ~~w~~e will be called to love even more deeply that which God has created and loves.

**SONG:** **Take me as I am (sung twice) (Reggie Ott)**

Take, O take me as I am;
Summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart
And live in me.

**READING (2 Corinthians 6:2, 5:20) (Jim De Quattro)**

We implore you in Christ’s name: know that you are a friend of God!. . . We beg you not to receive this grace of God in vain. God has already said, ‘In a favorable time I have heard you; on the day of salvation, I have helped you’ [Isaiah 49:8]. Well, now is that favorable time! Today is the day of salvation!

Become an ambassador for Christ, as if God were appealing through us for justice, peace, and communion!

**REFLECTION (Charlotte Cook)**

Sr. Joan Chittister writes, “Lent is a call to weep for what we could have been and are not. Lent is the grace to grieve for what we should have done and did not. Lent is the opportunity to change what we ought to change but have not. Lent is about becoming, doing and changing whatever it is that is blocking the fullness of life in us right now.”

Lent is like an annual check-up on my part of the Body of Christ. A time to notice what is missing… hurting… broken… tired… fragile… or shaky.

When my part of the Body lacks strength or health, I am more likely to participate in sinfulness that harms other parts of the Body of Christ. Lent is a time to both feel and believe in the healing fact that we are planted in the love God has for us and for all creation.

Lent is a time to try out the virtues that make this healing possible. Fr. Richard Rohr urges us to grow communion and community in a stance of simplicity, vulnerability, dialogue, powerlessness, and humility.

A traditional Lenten spiritual discipline of giving up something can become a way of “giving to.” With a stance of communion, we can “give up” a favorite food in solidarity with people who are hungry. We can set our thermostats to remind us of earth’s resources or those without shelter. We can give up something to give ourselves more fully **as** a global community.

Let’s start tonight by looking at ourselves with holy curiosity, considering how we hope to live differently this Lent. In that spirit, you might ask yourself:

* Where do you feel fragile or broken and **in need of healing**? (Pause)
* What **feelings of anger, hurt, and pain** can you let go of? (Pause)
* What **dialogues can you begin**, especially with someone with whom that is not easy? (Pause)
* What commitments to **just and simple living** can you try for 40 days? (Pause)
* What **spiritual practices** can sustain you? (Pause)

As we enter these 40 days, we strengthen each other to do the hard work of being ambassadors for God, engaged in the world.  **This** is the acceptable time. **This** is the day of salvation.

*(Slight pause.)*

We invite you into a slightly longer reflection this evening. Go wherever your heart takes you. This is time for you and God; we won’t be sharing afterwards.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS (Charlotte Cook)**

What ways of simplicity, vulnerability, dialogue, or humility call you as you work to heal yourself and the Body of Christ?

How will you spend time with Jesus, who is walking beside you?

**SILENT REFLECTION** (**Betty**: Start slide 1, time 4 minutes, chime, stop slide.)

**LENTEN INTENTION (Anne Regan and Bill Fanelli)**

(Reader 1) We invite you to take what is emerging in your heart right now to form your intention for Lent.  *[Pause.]*

(Reading 2) Now we invite you to write or draw your intention on the Feb. 27th page of your Little Black Book or on your piece of paper. *[Pause.]*

(Reader 1) Now seal your intention by placing your thumb in what you have brought (ashes, oil or water).  Mark the shape of a cross in your book or on your paper.  *[Pause.]*

(Reader 2) Lent summons us to live anew as a community.  As we seek to be your ambassadors to the world let us seal each other and our community.  Raise your thumbs to the camera making the sign of the cross and saying, “Now is the day of salvation. Become ambassadors for Christ.” *[Pause.]*

(Reader 1) O God, day by day, week by week, throughout this Lent we ask you to help us open up new spaces in ourselves and in our world – spaces where your holy Spirit gives us room to act, spaces where we will affirm that this is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. Amen.

**SONG:** **Take me as I am (twice) (Reggie Ott)**

Take, O take me as I am;
Summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart
And live in me.

**FINAL BLESSING (Betty)**

Let us extend our hands over each other and bless each other.

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

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. Blessed be.

**CLOSING SONG:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmnnMHGvVJc> 2:12- end

(Betty: show slide 2, play embedded music.)

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure!
Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
“Earth has no sorrow that heav’n cannot cure.”

**RESOURCES**

Opening Ritual – “Lent is a call…” quote from Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister: <http://rosemarieberger.com/2011/03/15/joan-chittister-lent-is-a-chance-to-grieve/>

“Come, ye disconsolate” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmnnMHGvVJc

Come, ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heav’n cannot heal.

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure!
Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
“Earth has no sorrow that heav’n cannot cure.”

Here see the bread of life, see waters flowing
Forth from the throne of God, pure from above.
Come to the feast of love; come, ever knowing
Earth has no sorrow but heav’n can remove.

“Blessing the Dust – A Blessing for Ash Wednesday” by Jan Richardson

<https://paintedprayerbook.com/2013/02/08/ash-wednesday-blessing-the-dust/>

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.