



BE STILL

Take a moment to allow whatever is in your heart to rise and offer your thoughts to the loving care of the Lord today.

Sing, Play or Listen:

Merciful God via:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3jCjvZuPIE>

Refrain Sign us with ashes, merciful God
Children of dust as to dust we return
Sign us with ashes, merciful God
Mark us and make us as your own.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle © GIA Publications, 2006

Gathering Prayer

Merciful God, as we gather and prepare for these forty days of Lent, encourage us in our efforts to return to you through our prayer and reflection. Amen

THIS WEEK WE CELEBRATE

- Wednesday 14 February: Ash Wednesday

READING

A reading from the prophet Joel (2:12-18)

Let your hearts be broken, and not your garments torn.

'Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks –
come back to me with all your heart,
fasting, weeping, mourning.'

Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn,
turn to the Lord your God again,
for he is all tenderness and compassion,
slow to anger, rich in graciousness,
and ready to relent.

Who knows if he will not turn again, will not relent,
will not leave a blessing as he passes,
oblation and libation

for the Lord your God?

Sound the trumpet in Zion!

Order a fast,

proclaim a solemn assembly,

call the people together,

summon the community,

assemble the elders,

gather the children,

even the infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom

and the bride her alcove.

Between vestibule and altar let the priests,
the ministers of the Lord, lament.

Let them say,

'Spare your people, Lord!

Do not make your heritage a thing of shame,
a byword for the nations.

Why should it be said among the nations,
"Where is their God?"

Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land,
took pity on his people.

The Word of the Lord.

Ponder

Re-read the text. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) noted that in the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text it is good to practice *Lectio Divina* – the reading of God's word in prayer asking that it 'enlighten and renew' us. The following questions may help with this:

- Lord, what does this text mean to me?
- What is it about my life that you want me to change by this text?
- What troubles me about this text?
- Why am I not interested in this?
- What do I find pleasant about this text?
- What is it about this word that moves me?
- What attracts me?
- Why does it attract me?

Reflect

From the moment we hear this plaintive call from the Book of Joel: 'No, no – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning' (Jl 2:12) we are invited to plunge into a different world, a different way of being. A way of being where we can lay bare our hearts as we seek wisdom and truth. A time to return to the heart and the soul of it all. The holy retreat time of Lent.

This year we take into our Lenten hearts the great suffering of the victims of sexual abuse in the Australian Catholic Church.

What else do I take into my Lent heart this year?

PRAY

A Prayer for Reparation

God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong, always present, always just: You gave your only Son to save us by the blood of his cross. Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace, join to your own suffering the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit by those who betrayed the trust placed in them. Hear our cries as we agonise over the harm done to our brothers and sisters. Breathe wisdom into our prayers, soothe restless hearts with hope, steady shaken spirits with faith: Show us the way to justice and wholeness, enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy. Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people's wounds and transform our brokenness. Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace, so that we may act with justice and find peace in you. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(Source: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)