

# ASH WEDNESDAY

March 9, 2011

12:00 P.M.

## Prelude

*Kyrie Eleison*  
Dr. Frank Contreras, Organist

Georgian Chant

## \*Call to Worship

## \*Hymn 85

*What Wondrous Love is This*

WONDROUS LOVE

## First Reading

Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21

Pew Bible Page 6

## Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

## Second Reading

Joel 2:1-2; 12-17

Pew Bible Page 1037

## Homily

## Special Music

*Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes*  
Elizabeth Wright and Patricia Hacker, duet

BEACH SPRING

## Invitation to Observe the Lenten Discipline

Explanation of Meaning  
Responsive Reading-Psalm 51:1-17

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

**People: Wash me through and through from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.**

Leader: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

**People: Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.**

Leader: And so you are justified when you speak and upright in your judgment.

**People: Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, a sinner from my mother's womb.**

Leader: For behold, you look for truth deep within me, and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

**People: Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.**

Leader: Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the body you have broken may rejoice.

**People: Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.**

Leader: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

**People: Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

Leader: Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

**People: I shall teach your ways to the wicked, and sinners shall return to you.**

Leader: Deliver me from death, O God, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness, O God of my salvation.

**People: Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Leader: Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.

**People: The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

## Imposition of Ashes

*(Those desiring Imposition of Ashes, please come forward down the center aisle and return by the side aisles.)*

## The Call to Observe Holy Lent

*I Come to the Cross*  
Patricia Hacker

Batstone and Somma

## Depart in Silence

## Postlude

*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*  
Dr. Frank Contreras, Organist

Johann S. Bach

**Rev. Dr. Mark Mueller, Pastor**  
**Andrew Bevel, Youth Director**  
**Patricia Hacker, Director of Music**  
**Dr. Frank Contreras, Organist**

## LENTEN ACTIVITIES

March 13 - First Sunday in Lent

April 17 - Palm Sunday (Holy week begins)

- Easter Egg Hunt

April 21 - 6:00 p.m.-Maundy Thursday worship service /GBH

April 22 - 12:00 p.m.- Good Friday worship service/GBH

April 24 - Easter Sunday/One Great Hour of Sharing Offering taken

- 6:30 a.m.- Sunrise Service/GBH

- 8:00 a.m.- Worship/GBH

-10:30 a.m.- Worship/Sanctuary

\*Those who are able please stand.

## The Tradition of Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the name given to the first day of the season of Lent, in which the Pastor applies ashes to the foreheads of Christians to signify an inner repentance. But what is the history and the meaning of this Christian holy day?

Ash Wednesday, originally called *dies cinerum* (day of ashes) is mentioned in the earliest copies of the Gregorian Sacramentary, and probably dates from at least the 8th Century. One of the earliest descriptions of Ash Wednesday is found in the writings of the Anglo-Saxon abbot Aelfric (955-1020). In his Lives of the Saints, he writes, "We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast."

As Aelfric suggests, the pouring of ashes on one's body (and dressing in sackcloth, a very rough material) as an outer manifestation of inner repentance or mourning is an ancient practice. It is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. What is probably the earliest occurrence is found at the very end of the book of Job. Job, having been rebuked by God, confesses, "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Other examples are found in 2 Samuel 13:19, Esther 4:1,3, Isaiah 61:3, Jeremiah 6:26, Ezekiel 27:30, and Daniel 9:3. In the New

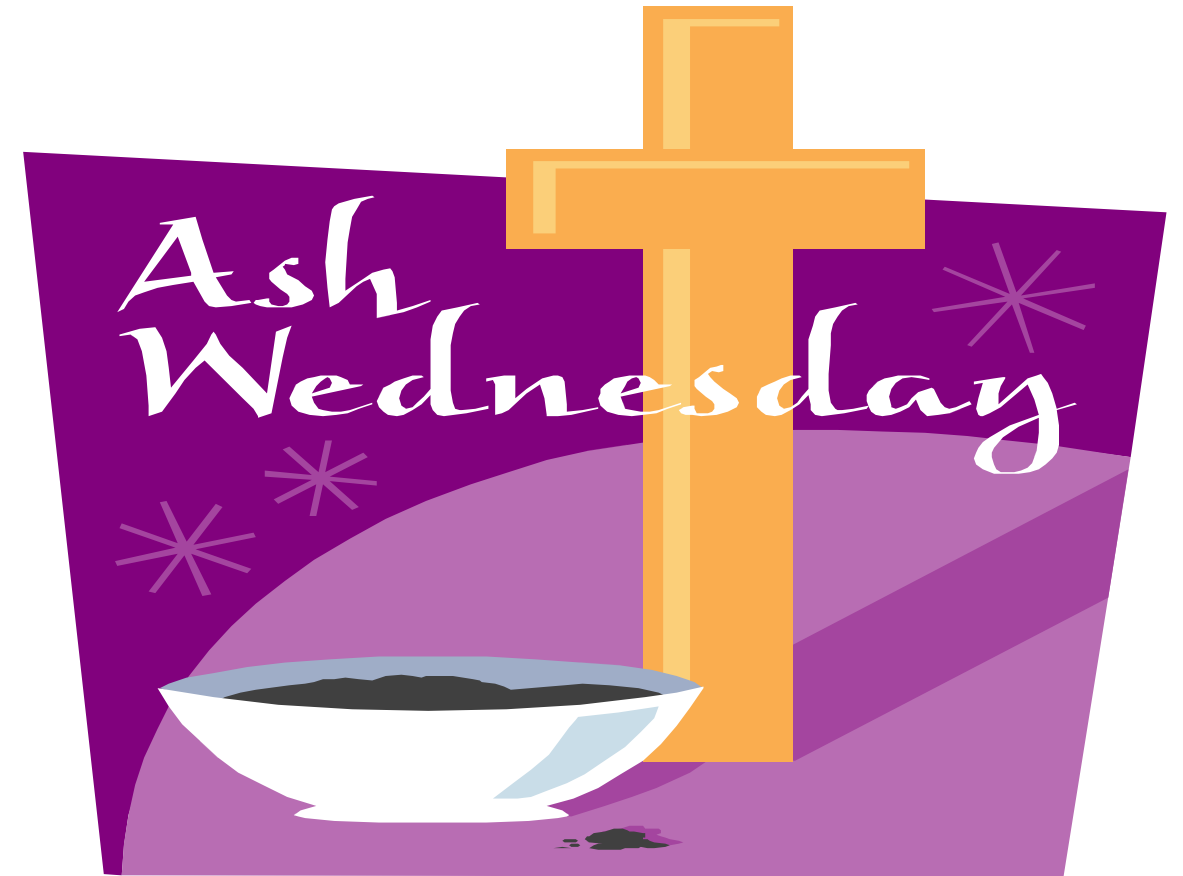
Testament, Jesus alludes to the practice in Matthew 11:21: "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

The Pastor applies ashes in the shape of the cross on the forehead of each, while speaking the words, "For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). This is of course what God spoke to Adam and Eve after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit and fallen into sin. These words indicated to our first parents the bitterest fruit of their sin, namely death. In the context of the Ash Wednesday imposition of ashes, they remind each penitent of their sinfulness and mortality, and, thus, their need to repent and get right with God before it is too late.

Ash Wednesday, like the season of Lent, is never mentioned in Scripture and is not commanded by God. Christians are free to either observe or not observe. It also should be obvious that the imposition of ashes, like similar external practices, are meaningless, even hypocritical, unless there is a corresponding inner repentance and change of behavior.

Ash Wednesday is a blessed time to experience a physical mark and reminder that, as mortals, our life on earth is brief and we depend on the Living Christ for eternal life.

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*Huntsville, Alabama*

*Rev. Dr. Mark Mueller, Pastor*

*Ash Wednesday*

*March 9, 2011*

*12:00 P.M.*