

THE FIRST DAY OF LENT: ASH WEDNESDAY

The First Lesson. The Reader begins

A Reading from the Book of Joel

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. “Yet even now,” says the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil. Who knows whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, “Spare thy people, O LORD, and make not thy heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

The Reader concludes The Word of the Lord.

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Psalm 103:8-14

Said Mass Reader says:

“Please join me in reading Psalm 103, verses 8 through 14, found in the red Prayer Book on page 733.”

(The Reader repeats the above information several times)

8. The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.
9. He will not always accuse us, *
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
10. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
11. For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
12. As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he removed our sins from us.
13. As a father cares for his children, *
so does the LORD care for those who fear him.
14. For he himself knows whereof we are made; *
he remembers that we are but dust.

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The Second Lesson. The Reader begins

A Reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, “At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.” Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in any one’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

The Reader concludes The Word of the Lord.

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The Holy Gospel

The Minister says

The Lord be with you.

People

And also with you.

Minister

✠ The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus said, “Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for

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yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

The Minister says: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.