

# ASH WEDNESDAY



## Even Now

O God,  
you show yourself throughout the ages  
as gracious, merciful, slow to anger,  
abounding in steadfast love.  
You give us not what we deserve but turn  
your face toward us  
and rain down your blessings upon us.  
Even now you call us to return to you.

Help us to answer you.  
Give us the strength that we need  
to look at a broken world and respond,  
that in loving one another we can love  
as you love,  
boundlessly and with compassion.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Wednesday, February 17, 2021 Called Together for a Broken World



*Today's readings: Joel 2:12–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 12–13, 14 and 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18.* As the Church begins a period marked by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we hear Jesus teach us how we are to fast. Jesus tells us that our observance should be hidden, and that it will be seen by our Father, who sees what is hidden. And yet we wear our penitence marked upon our foreheads for all to see.

Jesus mentions that the “hypocrites” look gloomy and neglect their appearance because they seek social affirmation of their holiness. It is easy to judge these people of long ago and even easier to judge people we know. Is what they do so foreign to us? All of us desire to belong, to be embraced, to be part of a community.

The prophet Joel calls us to the kind of community we seek; rather than running after superficial approval, he calls all to a communal work, the great fast. When we look at the world around us, just like Joel, we see that everything is not as it should be. We recognize that the world is in dire need of God’s mercy, love, and forgiveness. Joel calls us to rend our hearts. Let us blow the horn and gather the people to ask for God’s mercy and forgiveness on behalf of a broken world. Marked with the sign of ashes, together we go into the world to be a sign of its impending redemption.

How is God calling you to respond to the world’s brokenness this Lent?