

Sign of Death and Life

Soaring buildings of steel and concrete--these can smolder into ravines of ash. Damp, green forests of moss-cloaked trees can burn into ash-covered skeletal remains. Mountain peaks can detonate from buried, churning cauldrons that carry ash skyward and drop it on meadows and beaches miles away. Fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters--they too give bones and flesh, warm blood and familiar voice over to ash. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" says the pastor, standing by a hole in the ground. There is a place like this for all of us.

An uncomfortable gloominess pesters us on this day, Ash Wednesday. Without hesitation the sober announcement finds our ears and more importantly our hearts: "Remember that you are dust." Many of us will be marked on our brows with the same symbol that signed us at our baptism. The sign of the cross will be impressed upon our flesh. However today the imprint is gray ash, the remains of dying embers, and not the oil of anointing for someone freshly risen from baptismal water.

How is it that we come to this place of worship and take on this awfully transformed symbol? The joyous, watery, baptismal birth mark is changed into the fearful, gritty Ash Wednesday death mark. Is there not enough ruin and sorrow in our lives and in our world without welcoming its imprint here in worship?

Yet isn't it precisely here that we need to encounter this sign of mortality? Here, in the shadow of the cross, we can accept this truth. For to honestly face our death is to begin meeting the wonder of life in Christ. "Send me the grace my spirit needs," we pray with Martin Luther (LBW 295), "without it I am nothing." To admit that we are indeed helplessly sinful, sliding toward death, is the first step toward repentance and reclaiming our baptismal birthright.

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church on this Ash Wednesday. In the light of our Covid-19 protocols, please review some of our guidelines below.

Masks must be worn. We have some available to take if you don't have one. Some are cloth masks and can be taken home to wash and reuse. There are also disposable masks.

Please do not congregate in the Narthex (entrance area) either as you arrive or leave.

To minimize direct contact, we will use the outside aisles only for entry and exit. The center aisle will be used for communion, special needs, or emergency exit.

Ushers will fill the pews from the front to the back of the church and dismiss from the back to the front. Please follow their directions. We are sorry everyone cannot have their usual seat.

NOTE: We can speak the congregational responses behind our masks. Dr. Tony will provide music. The service will be recorded and published to the website. We are now live streaming the service on our church website, www.firststjohn.com

Elders will wear gloves. You can get a bulletin at the check-in table when you walk in. Please do not leave your bulletin in the pew when you exit; take it home or put it in the recycling bin at the front door.

There is a small wooden church just to the right of the main door when you come in. It has a slot for your offering.

Restrooms are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take the left set of steps down. The ladies room is at one end of the hallway, and the men's room is at the other. Return to the Narthex using the opposite set of stairs. Please, one person only in the restroom area.

Diaper Changing: A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

First St. John Lutheran Church
2471 Seaman St.
Toledo, OH 43605
419-691-7222 or 419-691-9524

Rev. Jerald K. Rayl, Pastor
Dr. Anthony Pattin, Organist

March 10, 2021 11:00 am & 7:00 pm Lent Midweek

ORDER OF WORSHIP

How does one escape from a bad situation? Where does one turn when surrounded by brutality, slavery, and death? We desire to flee, to find refuge. We need to begin a journey that will set us free, but the result of our efforts is nothing more than going in circles. We seek freedom; we receive greater slavery. We journey toward light; we end up in deeper darkness. How do we escape? It is God who leads us on the journey out of this slavery to sin and death. Where does He take us? To the water—to the banks of the Red Sea, or the River Jordan, or to the baptismal font; here, we are set free. The bondage of sin and death, the claws of Satan, no longer hold us, for we have been through the water. These are the waters of death for our enemies, and they are the waters of life for us. The enemy of our old Adam is drowned in these waters, but the New Adam comes through to new life. We have been rescued from the enemy by the waters and made the children of God.

Prelude

Dr. Pattin

(The Congregation stands)

Opening Hym “All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night” No. 565

OPENING SENTENCES

- P: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears!
- C: **For I am a sojourner with You, a guest, like all my fathers.** *Ps. 39:12*
- P: Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to Me, says the LORD of hosts,
- C: **and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.** *Zech. 1:3*
- P: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

C : let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Is. 55:7

P: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

C: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Is. 35:10

P: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

C: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears!

C: For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers. Ps. 39:12

CONFESSION

P: We are on a journey from a deserved exile to a gracious promised land. Although we merit nothing, because our heavenly Father promises forgiveness and mercy to all who call on Him for Jesus' sake, let us go to Him, confessing our sin.

(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

P: Heavenly Father, we are fallen creatures, prone to hiding our faults from one another, yet knowing our sins are laid bare before You.

C: Forgive us and clothe us with Christ's own righteousness.

P: We have erred and strayed from Your way.

C: Forgive us and turn our feet toward the paradise You promise.

P: We have attempted to placate Your just demands by our own efforts.

C: Forgive us for the sake of Your Son's sacrifice in our stead.

P: We have often failed to reflect the new life You granted us in our Baptism.

C: Forgive us and drown the old Adam within us.

P: We have eaten "forbidden fruit" in our disobedient thinking, speaking, and acting.

C: Forgive us and grant us the new life won on the tree of the cross.

P: We have failed to trust Your care and protection as we journey through this wilderness.

C: Forgive us and accompany us on our pilgrim way.

P: Our gracious God, even when we were dead in our trespasses, You made us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5). You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). May He

(Refrain)

**So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it someday for a crown.**

**To that old rugged cross I will ever be true,
its shame and reproach gladly bear;
then he'll call me some day to my home far away,
where his glory forever I'll share**

(Refrain)

Postlude

Dr. Pattin

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Welcome to all who are worshipping with us in the name of Jesus Christ.

ELDERS:

but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(The Congregation is seated)

P: Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days.
Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those
who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence
and above all, that we may find our treasure in the life of your
Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

P: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping

**C: That awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may
rest in peace.**

P: Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace; Your word has
been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which You
have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal You
to the nations and the glory of Your people Israel.

**C: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping

**C: That awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may
rest in peace.**

Benediction

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine
upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up God's
countenance upon you and give you peace. In the name of the
Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

THE PASSION HISTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST Reading — Part 2

CLOSING HYMN “The Old Rugged Cross”

**On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame.
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.**

who began this good work in you bring it to completion in the day of
our Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

C: Amen.

(The Congregation is seated)

The Service of the Word

First Reading: A reading from Genesis 14:13-31

*The Lord God has shown strength and power through the plaques
that finally convinced the Egyptian Pharaoh to free the Hebrew
people, but he has a change of mind and pursues the fleeing slaves.
With their backs to the Red Sea, and Pharaoh's advancing army
approaching, the Lord saves the people through the waters of the Red
Sea.*

And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the
salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the
Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The
LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

¹⁵ The LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people
of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand
over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the
sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so
that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and
all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸ And the Egyptians shall
know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh,
his chariots, and his horsemen.”

¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel
moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from
before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of
Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the
darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all
night.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD
drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea
dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel
went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall
to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued
and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses,
his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the
LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian

forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.”

²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. ²⁹ But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

P: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

(The Congregation stands for the reading of the Gospel)

Gospel Acclamation (Spoken)

P: Return to the Lord your God, who is gracious and merciful,

C: **slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

P: The Gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 1.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL: Mark 1:9-11

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Gospel Response (Spoken)

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

(The Congregation is seated)

Sermon “Out of Egypt: Through the Water”

Pastor Rayl

Hymn “Restore in Us, O God”

No. 328

Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Offering

Musical Offertory

Dr. Pattin

(The Congregation stands)

The Bidding Prayer *(each petition concludes with:)*

P: O Lord have mercy on us.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

The Lord’s Prayer *(prayed by all)*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

And lead us not into temptation,