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*We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord*

**Prelude** - *Moment of silence*

**Greeting**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

**God's mercy endures forever.**

**Song of Meditation FWS# 2236 "Gather Us In"**

*Author: Marty Haugen*

*Publication Date: 2001*

*Copyright: © 1982 GIA Publications, Inc.*

*Composer: Marty Haugen*

**Here in this place new light is  
streaming  
Now is the darkness vanished away  
See in this space our fears and our  
dreamings  
Brought here to you in the light of this  
day**

**Gather us in, the lost and forsaken  
Gather us in, the blind and the lame  
Call to us now and we shall awaken  
We shall arise at the sound of our name**

**We are the young, our lives are a  
mystery  
We are the old who yearn for your face  
We have been sung throughout all of  
history  
Called to be light to the whole human  
race**

**Gather us in, the rich and the haughty  
Gather us in, the proud and the strong  
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly  
Give us the courage to enter the song**

**Here we will take the wine and the  
water  
Here we will take the bread of new  
birth  
Here you shall call your sons and your  
daughters  
Call us anew to be salt for the earth**

**Give us to drink the wine of  
compassion  
Give us to eat the bread that is you  
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion  
Lives that are holy and hearts that are  
true**

**Not in the dark of buildings confining  
Not in some heaven light years away  
But here in this place the new light is  
shining  
Now is the kingdom, now is the day**

**Gather us in and hold us forever  
Gather us in and make us your own  
Gather us in, all peoples together  
Fire of love in our flesh and our bones  
Fire of love in our flesh and our bones**

## Opening Prayer for Ash Wednesday

Purifying Mystery, your light exposes in us all that we hide.  
Awaken us and all your Holy Church to spiritual combat.  
Lead us to purity of soul and body in these forty days.

**Fortify us to take an honest look at ourselves and to name our secret sins and our ruts of disobedience. Let abstinence from our addictions free us for prayer and the fire of love.**

**In confidence we commend ourselves and all our passions and cares to your never-failing mercy.**

We intercede for the world and the church:  
Especially for those we have hurt by our preoccupations ...  
For those who live sacrificially so that others  
may know your justice and compassion ...

**For a just peace in and among nations ...**

**For professionals who help others stand in the light ...**

**For the church in every place ...**

**For the concerns and cares of our lives ...**

Holy God, whose Spirit drives us into the wilderness to confront our priorities with a holy fast; grant that as we are about to do battle with our demons and the power of evil, we may be defended by our grace through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## Hymn #402 "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian"

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**1 Lord, I want to be a Christian  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my  
heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my  
heart.**

**2 Lord, I want to be more loving  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be more loving in my  
heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be more loving in my  
heart.**

**3 Lord, I want to be more holy  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be more holy in my  
heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be more holy in my  
heart.**

**4 Lord, I want to be like Jesus  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my  
heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my  
heart.**

**Scripture lesson.....Joel 2:1-2, 12-17**

**New Revised Standard Version**

2 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—  
2 a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness spread upon the mountains  
a great and powerful army comes;  
their like has never been from of old,  
nor will be again after them  
in ages to come.

12 Yet even now, says the Lord,  
return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
13 rend your hearts and not your clothing.  
Return to the Lord, your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
and relents from punishing.  
14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,  
and leave a blessing behind him,  
a grain offering and a drink offering  
for the Lord, your God?

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sanctify a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;  
16 gather the people.  
Sanctify the congregation;  
assemble the aged;  
gather the children,  
even infants at the breast.  
Let the bridegroom leave his room,  
and the bride her canopy.

17 Between the vestibule and the altar  
let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep.  
Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord,  
and do not make your heritage a mockery,  
a byword among the nations.  
Why should it be said among the peoples,  
'Where is their God?'"

**Response in song**

**FWS #2164 "Sanctuary"**

**Please remain seated**

*Author: John Thompson*

*Author: Randy Scruggs*

*Publication Date: 2003*

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*Tune Information*

*Composer: John Thompson*

*Composer: Randy Scruggs*

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**Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary  
Pure and holy, tried and true  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living  
Sanctuary for You**

**Verse 2:**

**It is you, Lord  
Who came to save  
The heart and soul  
of every man.  
It is you Lord  
Who knows my weakness,  
Who gives me strength,  
With thine own hand.**

**Verse 3:**

**Lead Me on Lord  
From temptation,  
Purify me  
From within.  
Fill my heart with  
Your holy spirit,  
Take away  
All my sin.**

**Scripture Lesson.....2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10**  
**New Revised Standard Version**

20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 As we work together with him,[a] we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says,

*“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,  
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”*

*See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! 3 We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

**Response in song**

**UMH #407 “Close to Thee”**

**Please remain seated**

Author: Fanny J. Crosby (1874)

Publication Date: 1989

Tune Information

Composer: Silas J. Vail (1874)

**1. Thou my everlasting portion,  
more than friend or life to me,  
all along my pilgrim journey,  
Savior, let me walk with thee.**

**Close to thee, close to thee,  
close to thee, close to thee,  
gladly will I toil and suffer,  
only let me walk with thee.**

**Refrain:**

**Close to thee, close to thee,  
close to thee, close to thee,  
all along my pilgrim journey,  
Savior, let me walk with thee.**

**3. Lead me through the vale of  
shadows,  
bear me o'er life's fitful sea;  
then the gate of life eternal  
may I enter, Lord, with thee.**

**2. Not for ease or worldly pleasure,  
nor for fame my prayer shall be;  
gladly will I toil and suffer,  
only let me walk with thee.**

**Refrain:**

**Close to thee, close to thee,  
close to thee, close to thee,  
then the gate of life eternal  
may I enter, Lord, with thee.**

**Refrain:**

**Scripture Lesson.....Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**  
**New Revised Standard Version**

**Concerning Almsgiving**

6 "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.[a]

**Concerning Prayer**

5 "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever 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.[b]

**Response in song FWS #2128 "Come and Find the Quiet Center" Please remain seated**

Author: Shirley Erena Murray  
Publication Date: 2001  
Copyright: ©1992 Hope Publishing Co.  
Tune Information  
Composer (attr.): B.F. White  
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**1 Come and find the quiet center  
in the crowded life we lead,  
find the room for hope to enter,  
find the frame where we are freed:  
Clear the chaos and the clutter,  
clear our eyes, that we can see  
all the things that really matter,  
be at peace, and simply be.**

**2 Silence is a friend who claims us,  
cools the heat and slows the pace,  
God it is who speaks and names us,  
knows our being, touches base,**

**making space within our thinking,  
lifting shades to show the sun,  
raising courage when we're shrinking,  
finding scope for faith begun.**

**3 In the Spirit let us travel,  
open to each other's pain,  
let our loves and fears unravel,  
celebrate the space we gain:  
there's a place for deepest dreaming,  
there's a time for heart to care,  
in the Spirit's lively scheming  
there is always room to spare!**

**Message**

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**Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline  
Thanksgiving over the Ashes  
Imposition of Ashes**

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## Prayer

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God. God of Love. God of Comfort.

You are indeed our Everything – you're a shelter in times of storm,

You are the Alpha and Omega,

You are the God of the angel armies.

Thank you for your pure goodness toward us.

Thank you that you did not just arrive to meet us on this Sunday, but you have been with us all week long.

**O Lord, we have failed to bring you the first of all our blessings. We have been slow to come to the place you have chosen as a dwelling for your name. We have been intoxicated by a hunger for power, possessions, and protection. We have been dehydrated by injustice. We are misguided and deluded. As former aliens in this land of milk and honey, we have continued the cycle of discrimination and the exploitation of new aliens and strangers. Forgive us, we pray. Refresh us for justice and compassion. Make us sober for sacrificial service. Guide us again through your Word and your will and your way.**

**In your mercy O Lord, Hear our prayers.**

### THE GREAT THANKSGIVING FOR EARLY IN LENT

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,  
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,  
Father Almighty creator of heaven and earth.

You brought all things into being and called them good.

From the dust of the earth, you formed us into your image  
and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights,  
you bore up the ark on the waters, saved Noah and his family,  
and made covenant with every living creature on earth.

When you led your people to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights,  
you gave us your commandments and made us your covenant people.

When your people forsook your covenant,  
your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights;  
and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.  
When you gave him to save us from our sin,  
your Spirit led him into the wilderness,  
where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry.  
When he suffered and died on a cross for our sin, you raised him to life,  
presented him alive to the apostles during forty days,  
and exalted him at your right hand.  
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection  
you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death,  
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.  
Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter,  
you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts,  
that during these forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced  
to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,  
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup,  
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,  
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving,  
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,  
and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,  
that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,  
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,  
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.



Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father now and forever. Amen.

### **Song of Sending FWS #2241 "The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve"**

Author: Delores Dufner, OSB

Publication Date: 2001

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Tune Information

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**1 The spirit sends us forth to serve;  
we go in Jesus' name  
to bring glad tidings to the poor,  
God's favor to proclaim.**

**3 We go to be the hands of Christ,  
to scatter joy like seed  
and all our days, to cherish life,  
to do the loving deed.**

**2 We go to comfort those who mourn  
and set the burdened free:  
where hope is dim, to share a dream  
and help the blind to see.**

**4 Then let us go to serve in peace,  
the Gospel to proclaim.  
God's Spirit has empowered us;  
we go in Jesus' name.**

#### **\*Dismissal with Blessing**

May God, who has forgiven and fed us, now make us strong for these days ahead. May Jesus lead us, and we be found faithful to follow. May the Spirit drive us into the wilderness, burning away the chaff of our lives, and purifying our hearts for all to see and be blessed. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Mercy, Master, and Fire, be with us and remain with us Always! Amen.

### **Please depart in silence and reflection**

#### **What is Ash Wednesday?**

*Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Lenten season, a period of 40-some days focused on spiritual purification and repentance. It is a day of fasting for Catholic and Anglican churches. Ash Wednesday gets its name from the practice of the distribution of ashes upon the foreheads of Christians.*

#### **What do the black marks mean?**

*Those black marks are meant to be crosses, although as the day wears on they can look like black smudges. They are a mixture of ashes, Holy Water and, sometimes, olive oil. It's especially significant, because Jesus was greeted in Jerusalem as a hero and the Messiah by the mob and he would eventually be put to death by the hands of the Romans at the insistence of those people. The ashes are meant to remind Christians about human mortality, while also showing the individual's desire for repentance and mourning of their own sins. As the priest or minister puts the ash on the body, he, or she, says "Remember that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return" (Genesis 3:19) or "Repent, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).*