

## Call to Worship:

Adapted from: The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America by Mark Lewis Taylor.

“The notion of the executed God, if seriously embraced, means the loss of certain long-standing modes of belief in God. Some of our dearest gods die, we might say, when we allow ourselves to meditate on the executed God.

“To be sure, the gods looked for apart from world struggle, apart from concrete suffering, these die. The gods that keep us talking about small problems, about worlds of clean churches and safe spaces, these are put to death. When we turn to Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and work was defined by participation in material conditions that led to torture and death, then we have to let go of other kinds of gods whose allure is still strong in some quarters today.”

God sent Jesus into the world, not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him.<sup>1</sup>  
**God’s love endures and strengthens us forever.**

God is our refuge and our strength, a present help in times of trouble, therefore we shall not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with tumult.<sup>2</sup>

**God’s love endures and strengthens us now.**

## *A Moment of Reflection...*

## We pray the following together....

Psalm 51 *Miserere mei, Deus* (Variation)

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your loving-kindness;  
**in your great compassion blot out our offenses.**

Wash us through and through from our wrongs  
**and cleanse us from the sins that separates us from you.**

For we know our transgression,  
**and our sin is ever before us.**

Against you only have we sinned  
**And done what is wrong in your sight.**

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

Indeed we have carried such distance from you for all our days,  
**from the time of the womb until now we seek to be closer.**

For behold, you look for truth deeply within us;  
**we know you will help us understand wisdom in your time.**

Purge us from what interferes in us with your ways and call;  
**cleanse us of our little gods to hear you more clearly.**

Fill us with thy joy and gladness at your names,  
**so that we and this world that is broken may rejoice!**

Turn your face to our sins with forgiveness;  
**and expunge what it is we do that displeases you.**

Create in us a clean heart, Eternal One;  
**and renew a right spirit within us.**

Cast us not away from your presence  
**and take not your holy Spirit from us.**

Give us, please, the joy of your saving help again  
**and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit.**

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:17; <sup>2</sup> Psalm 46: 1-3

We shall teach your ways, the Good News to all

**And open our hearts to the many you send us.**

Deliver us from the mysteries of this lifetime

**God of our salvation and promise.**

Open our lips, Dearest God,

**So that our voices may proclaim your praise.**

The only sacrifice you ask of us is a sharing of your Love

**You take no delight in the offerings of old.**

**How blessed we are to be welcomed by you, troubled spirits,  
contrite hearts, and all. Amen.**

***The Rite of Reconciliation:*** Please write out that offense or sin for which you would most like to repent, When you have finished writing, go to the candle and burn your paper, allowing the ashes to fall to the plate. Pick up a stone of your choosing, and return to your seat for quiet meditation.

As Jesus carried the separation of this world from God to the cross, we are called to eliminate that same separation, following in his teachings with courage, acceptance of risk, and trust. We know we are always imperfect in such things and approach our calls with humility, knowing we are from dust but for the breath of our God upon us.

As we share the ashes with one another, please do so with these words: *May these ashes remind you of the God in your life, who loves and forgives you.*

In wiping away the ashes, please do so saying: *The peace of Jesus be with you!*"

**Let us pray together the Prayer of Jesus**

When we are done praying, you are welcome to remain in the sanctuary to reflect and meditate. When you are ready to leave, please do so quietly through the church doors. Thank you for adding your Spirit to our worship on this Ash Wednesday,

## Our Service for Ash Wednesday



Dear People of God, a God of Many Names and Mysterious Ways,

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of Jesus' passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the early Church to prepare for this remembrance through community, prayer, and fasting. In the early Church, this season of Lent provided a time in which converts were prepared for Holy Baptism. Historically, it was also a time when those who had become separated from the community of followers were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the family of those following the teachings of Jesus. It was the way then, as it is now, to remember the message of pardon and absolution that our service will symbolize this evening. It is a reminder that we need to come together in forgiveness and pardon to reduce the distance between us and the God who loves us, as only God can.

Let us begin this evening's service with a moment of silence as we enter the sacred and mysterious place of God's presence.