Ash Wednesday

22nd February 2012
12:20pm

Call to Worship:

E te whanau a te Karaiti, every year at Easter, we celebrate the triumph of Love through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to practice with discipline daily turning to God, listening and waiting upon the source and power of our living. We begin this season by acknowledging our mortality, our ultimate powerlessness, and our ultimate reliance upon the ever-potent Love called God.

Psalm: The Heart of Stone

There are times when I've cried out,
"God, give me back my heart of stone
and a ladder so that I can climb
up to my head and live there
with doors and windows shut on feeling.
God, God, I'm tired of all the hurt.
For a little while, let me live
a second-hand life. Let me tread
the safe path of other people's ideas.
Just let me drop this awesome responsibility
you have given me,
to grow through love and pain."

Then I remember what it's like
to exist with a heart of stone.
How cold and dead I felt inside,
and how divided the world was
when viewed without love in my heart.

Remembering, I pour myself before God
and whisper into His waiting,
"My God, there is no going back.
It has to be a soft heart,
one that is always vulnerable
to the love and wounding
which is life,
which is growth,
which is You."

Keep within me, my God,
the heart of flesh.

Joy Cowley

Penitential Prayer

"I call heaven and earth to witness that I have set before you life and death… choose life"

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine."

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

"As you, God, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

May the God of mercy, justice, and compassion pardon you and set you free.

Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

The Blessing And Imposition of Ashes

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, calls us to turn to God, and place our hope in Love alone.

Gracious God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes remind us of our mortality and need, and remind us of your precious gifts of life and hope.

Amen.

The congregation are invited to come forward to receive the imposition of ashes. The priest will mark the forehead of each person with ashes, using the following words:

Remember you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.

Collect

Together we pray

Source of all love and mercy,
you hate nothing you have made.
Challenge us to forgive ourselves for those actions unworthy of the divine within us:
Create a new and contrite heart within us, that forsakes condemning ourselves and others. Open us to your spirit
that we may be a beacon of your love.
Amen.

The Gospel

The Holy Gospel According to St Matthew, chapter 6, beginning at 1st verse.

Praise and glory to God.

Matthew 6:1-8

This is the Gospel of Christ.
Praise to Christ the Word.

The Homily

The Peace

We commit ourselves to live in peace
as we work for it
To kindle peace within, between and beyond us

For the peace of Jesus is an active peace
Building, bridging and always dreaming

We share a sign of peace

The Great Thanksgiving

Hope is among us.

We are God's light

Shine then with freedom

Into all the corners of the world

Lest fear overcome the brilliance

Of life and light and liberty

From the beginning life has been shaped by despair, struggle, and triumph. Oppressive forces have time and again tried to destroy the hope of the marginalized and vulnerable. The forces of wealth and privilege, armies and theology, have beaten down upon the poor. Yet hope has never been extinguished. When all seems lost the embers stir back into life, and the light of justice ignites again. For this we give deep and heartfelt thanks.

Shortly before Jesus died he gathered around him his closest friends... women and men who had shared in his despair, struggles, and triumphs. They met in a small upstairs room. The forces of power and self-interest were closing in. All their excitement, anticipation, and hopes were about to be put to death on a cross. In this moment Jesus took bread and wine, and likened it to his own life, broken and poured out for others.

In doing so he invited them and us to share in the brokenness of our world, and to share too in the healing of our world through self-giving love. In bread broken and wine poured out he initiated a new community. An upside-down community which believes that loving is more important than winning, doing what is right is more important than doing what is safe, and setting people free is more important than trying to control their lives. It is a community marked by justice and hope.

Therefore with all who have struggled, dreamed, and triumphed we say:

**Holy, holy, holy is the Love called God,
the sparks of hope.
Blaze Justice blace.
Blest is Jesus who lit up our world,
who lit up our world.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna
to the lowest and the least.**

And so we remember on the night before he died Jesus took bread; when he had given thanks he broke it, gave it to his friends and said:
Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this to remember me.

After supper he took the cup; when he had given thanks he gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you, for this is my blood which brings new life; do this as often as you drink it, to remember me

With this bread and wine we remember the dream of God, and the call of God.

We offer bread to eat with eyes and hands held open. We pass this cup to share. We take, break, bless and give kindling hope ev'ry where.

Recalling the promise of tomorrow we wait out the long night of struggle, Remembering our brother Jesus, our sister Mary, and all our spiritual forbears, Rejoicing in the bonds of solidarity and the unquenchable Divine Energy, we take, eat and drink, knowing that the Spirit of God is here, within and among us, in simple food, in simple grace, calling us to freedom's banquet.

O Candle of calm and peace, lending your beauty to our darkened corners:
Come and share your halo of light with us, to comfort and to guide.

O Star of the darkened sky, you lead us if we choose to follow,
By night and by day, seeing and not seeing, we journey towards the truth.

O Sudden Flare, you explode like a burst of match flame in the darkness:
Come and illumine our plans, protests, and petitions for justice.

The Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the hope of

Christ.
We who are many are one body, for we all share the one bread.

The Invitation

Come, bringing your varied faiths and backgrounds, for all are welcome to share in this grace.

Communion

Prayer after Communion

I believe that God is in me as the sun is in the colour and fragrance of a flower – the Light in my darkness, the Voice in my silence.

Helen Keller

I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too will end, that peace and tranquillity will return once more.

Anne Frank

May the blessing of light be on us, light without and light within.

Celtic

The Lord's Prayer

As Christ teaches us we pray

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

Blessing

May Divine Wisdom hold us in the palm of Her hand
And breathe into us gently Her life-giving Spirit.

May the light of the new dawn break over us
Bringing insight, fresh courage and hope.

And may the fierce passion of the Love that is God
Send us out like sparks to set the world on fire.

Dismissal

Let us dream together, pray together, work together, to build one world of peace and justice for all.

Amen. We go in the light and hope of Jesus.