*Sung* Before thy throne, we sinners bend

Grace, pardon, life, to us extend.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord’s passion and resurrection. It became the custom of the church to prepare for this by a season of penitence and fasting.

At first, this season of Lent was observed by those who were preparing for Baptism at Easter and by those who were to be restored to the church’s fellowship from which they had been separated through sin. In course of time, the church came to recognise that, by a careful keeping of these days, all Christians might take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel and so grow in faith and in devotion to the Lord.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy word.

SCATTERING OF PRAYER CARD ASHES

We hold before Almighty God all those whose names were placed on the Prayer Tree in St Nicholas’ Church, Dundalk. We give thanks for healing, we give thanks that Christ, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, walks beside each suffering soul. May the prayers for each name rise like incense and may we all know the presence of Christ in our lives. As the ashes are scattered we pray that that action will remind us to join our prayers with hose who lovingly placed notes on the Tree. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Sung* Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy)

*Sung* Christe, eleison (Christ, have mercy)

*Sung* Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy)

Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully.

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Give us true repentance, forgive our sins of negligence and ignorance and our deliberate sins; and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit to amen our lives according to our holy word.

**Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.**

*Silence*

Make our hearts clean, O God.

**And renew a right spirit within us.**

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against neighbour, in what we have thought, in what we have said and done, through ignorance through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have wounded your love and marred your image in us. We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died, for us, forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE FIRST READING Joel 2: 12 – 17

Joel 2:12-17

**12**Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 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; 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?’”

This is the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM 51**

1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; ♦︎

 according to the abundance of your compassion

 blot out my offences.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness ♦︎

 and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my faults ♦︎

 and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against you only have I sinned ♦︎

 and done what is evil in your sight,

5 So that you are justified in your sentence ♦︎

 and righteous in your judgement.

6 I have been wicked even from my birth, ♦︎

 a sinner when my mother conceived me.

7 Behold, you desire truth deep within me ♦︎

 and shall make me understand wisdom

 in the depths of my heart.

8 Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; ♦︎

 wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, ♦︎

 that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

10 Turn your face from my sins ♦︎

 and blot out all my misdeeds.

11 Make me a clean heart, O God, ♦︎

 and renew a right spirit within me.

12 Cast me not away from your presence ♦︎

 and take not your holy spirit from me.

13 Give me again the joy of your salvation ♦︎

 and sustain me with your gracious spirit;

14 Then shall I teach your ways to the wicked ♦︎

 and sinners shall return to you.

15 Deliver me from my guilt, O God,

 the God of my salvation, ♦︎

 and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.

16 O Lord, open my lips ♦︎

 and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

17 For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it; ♦︎

 you take no delight in burnt offerings.

18 The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; ♦︎

 a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not des

Glory to the Father, and | to the | Son, and | to the | Holy | Spirit;

**as it was in the be|ginning, is | now, and shall be for | ever. | A|men.**

SECOND READING Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

Hear the gospel of our Saviour Christ, according to St Matthew in the 6th chapter, beginning at the first verse.

**Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

6‘Beware of practising 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. 3But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.\*

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. 6But 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.\*

16 ‘And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 17But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.\*

19 ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust\* consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust\* consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Hymn 652 v2 as in CH4

SERMON

Hymn 607 *Flugelhorn*

Let us call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father, creator of heaven and earth,

 **have mercy on us.**

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

**have mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit, giver of life,

**have mercy on us.**

Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons in one God,

**have mercy on us.**

Save us, good Lord, from all sin and wickedness, from pride, hypocrisy and conceit, from envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness,

**save us, good Lord.**

From sins of thought, word and deed, from the lusts of the flesh, from the deceits of the world and the snares of the devil,

**save us, good Lord.**

From fire, storm and flood, from disease, pestilence and want, from war and murder, and from dying unprepared,

**save us, good Lord.**

From all false doctrine, from hardness of heart, from contempt of your word and commandment, and from the evil of schism.

**save us, good Lord.**

In times of sorrow and in times of joy, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgement,

**save us, good Lord.**

Save us, Lord Christ, by the mystery of your holy incarnation, by your birth, childhood and obedience, by your baptism, fasting and temptation,

**save us, Lord Christ.**

By your ministry in word and work, by your mighty acts of power, and by your preaching of the kingdom,

**save us, Lord Christ.**

By your agony and trial, by your cross and passion, and by your precious death and burial,

**save us, Lord Christ.**

By your mighty resurrection, by your glorious ascension, and by your sending of the Holy Spirit,

**save us, Lord Christ.**

Hear us, good Lord: govern and direct your holy Church, fill it with love and truth, and grant it that unity which is your will,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Give your Church courage to preach the gospel and to make disciples of all the nations,

 **hear us, good Lord.**

Give knowledge and understanding to bishops, priests and deacons, that by their life and teaching they may proclaim your word,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Give all people grace to receive your word and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Bring all who have erred and are deceived into the way of truth,

**hear us, good Lord.**

FOR THE STATE

Guard and bless our rulers, north and south, and grant that they may trust in you, and seek your honour and glory,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Bless our country, and give grace, wisdom and understanding to all in authority,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Bless the European Union, and draw us closer to one another in justice and freedom,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Bless those who administer the law, that they may uphold justice in honesty and truth,

**hear us, good Lord**.

Bless and keep all who maintain peace and safety,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Give to all nations unity, peace and concord,

**hear us, good Lord.**

FOR ALL PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS

Strengthen the faithful, comfort and help the faint-hearted, raise up those who fall, and drive out all evil,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Support and encourage all who are in poverty, unemployment or distress, protect those whose work is dangerous, and keep in safety all who travel,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Keep fathers, mothers and children united in their family life, and give them wisdom and strength in times of stress,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Heal the sick, care for the old and lonely, and comfort the bereaved,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Remember the poor who long to hear good news: give us the will to strengthen them through acts of generous love,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Show your pity on victims of strife, on the homeless and the hungry, on prisoners, and on all who live in fear,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and turn their hearts,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Guide and direct all who influence others through the written or the spoken word, and inspire all who serve mankind in science, industry and art,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Bless and keep all your people,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Teach us to use the resources of the earth to your glory, that all may share in your goodness and praise you for your loving kindness,

**hear us, good Lord.**

Saviour of the world, forgive our sins, known and unknown, things done, and left undone; grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit that we may amend our lives according to your holy word, and share with all your people the joys of your eternal kingdom.

Jesus, Lamb of God, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, bearer of our sins, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, Redeemer of the world, **give us your peace.**

**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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Almighty God, in whom we live and move and have our being, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Grant us purity of heart and strength of purpose, that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will, no weakness from doing it; that that in your light we may see light, iand in your service find our perfect freedom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow him: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*Sung* Before thy throne, we sinners bend

Grace, pardon, life, to us extend.