



*Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hates nothing that You have made, and forgives the sins of all people who are repentant; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain from You, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

(Collect for Ash Wednesday)

Each of us was, and continues to be, formed by God. He loves each of us, having sent His Son to die on the Cross to atone for our sins and rise again to declare us right with the Father. Left to our own devices, we would live securely in our sin and perish in it. Yet, God wants something better for His human creatures! He uses the preaching of His Law to cut us to the heart, allowing Him to literally create new and contrite hearts within us. It pleases God when we implore Him to make us repentant, just as it pleased Him when King David prayed that very same prayer, lamenting the heinous sins that he had committed by violating the sanctity of family and of life. Having been made regenerate people of God, we are enabled to confess our sins to Him through our pastors. Then, when our pastors declare, "In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit," we know for certain that the forgiveness they speak is God's. Indeed, once God has forgiven our sins, He Himself no longer remembers that we ever committed them! *God's very nature is to forget sins that He has forgiven* (Isaiah 43:25)! We can then truly go in peace, fully reconciled to Him, confident that on the Last Day, we will be raised to eternal life in Him.

If you have sinned, yes, even if you have undergone and/or participated in abortion, even if you have been involved in a decision for "medical aid in dying," even if you have engaged in sex outside of marriage, the list goes on (and really you can insert any sin here), and sincerely regret your actions, know that there is forgiveness for these sins, too, at the foot of the Cross. We encourage you to set up a time to see your pastor for individual Confession and Absolution. This is a critical first-step in the process of healing. Know that your pastor will keep your confession strictly confidential. You may continue to struggle; know that your pastor is equipped to work with you, and if needed, refer you to Christian professionals to assist you to heal. Your pastor will also walk alongside you if you face any legal consequences for your sin.

God does not wish that any should perish, but that all, like King David, should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Your Lifeline Team prays God's richest blessings on you, that this Lenten season may be one of humble repentance for you. May you receive His forgiveness for all of your sins, and come to celebrate the Easter feast with great joy, anticipating the Last Day when there will be no more sin and sorrow, but eternal bliss for all of His people in His presence.