



Ash Wednesday

A Liturgy for the Home

Materials: A small piece of paper for each person. Pens / pencils. Ribbon or strip of paper with 'Alleluia' written on it. A flameproof bowl, a candle, and matches.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, a day on which Catholics traditionally observe fasting and abstinence. This means resisting eating between meals (fasting) and avoiding eating meat (abstaining). Many Catholics also attend Mass or have special prayer liturgies when they receive ashes on their foreheads. This year you may be celebrating a liturgy with your family at home.

Lent is a forty day preparation for Easter. It reminds us of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness before he took up his ministry. During that time he fasted and prayed.

Lent is a time of self-denial and prayer for us as well. During this period we are called on to focus on becoming closer to Jesus by praying a little more, doing good deeds for others, going without something we like and giving generously to others in need. Ash Wednesday is a good time for us to think about what we can do to grow closer to Jesus over the next weeks.



Ash Wednesday Liturgy

[Light the candle and make the sign of the cross together]

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Leader: Scripture says:

*'For everything, there is a season, A time for every matter under heaven:
A time to be born and a time to die; A time weep
and a time to laugh
A time to be sad and a time to dance
A time to speak and a time to keep silence.'*

Yesterday was 'Shrove Tuesday', Pancake Day, we celebrated with song and gladness. Today we begin our time of silence and sadness. We will not proclaim 'Alleluia' again until we celebrate the risen Lord at Easter.

We now place our streamers out of sight.

[Place streamers in a drawer or box until Easter.]

Leader: As we prepare for Easter, we are called to grow closer to Jesus through prayer, service to others and self-denial. Let us listen to God's word.

Reader 1: The Lord says:

*Come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.
But do not let your hearts be broken,
turn to the Lord again for he is tender and compassionate,
slow to anger and ready to forgive.*

The Word of the Lord

(Joel 2: 12-13)(For a fuller reading, go to Joel 2: 12-18)

All: Thanks be to God.

[At this point you may like to sing 'Come back to me with all your heart']

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJ20I-UhTec>

Leader: Now let us take a moment to think about how we can turn to God with all our heart this Lent. Write on your paper, one thing that you promise to do this Lent to grow closer to Jesus.

[everyone writes down a Lenten promise on their paper.]

Leader: As I call you name, come forward with your promise, light it from the candle and place it in the bowl to burn.

[call the names of each person, give assistance to young children if required.]

Reader 2: Lord God, we gather these offerings, our Lenten promises, and burn them in sacrifice to you. You, Lord, know our hearts. You call us to yourself. Help us to keep our promises faithfully throughout Lent.

Leader: Let us bless these ashes.

[All extend a hand over the bowl of ashes.]

Lord God, bless these ashes which are a sign of our desire to grow closer to you. Forgive us for the times we have turned away from you and draw us into your love.

[Take a smear of ash on your thumb and make a cross on the forehead of each person saying: "Return to God with all your heart."]

Final Blessing

Reader 3: We leave our sins behind us

All: **Amen**

Reader 3: We turn to God with prayers and penance

All: **Amen**

Reader 3: For he is kind and merciful

All: **Amen**

Leader: Let us go forth, keeping our Lenten promise to love and serv God with all our hearts

All: **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

[You can keep the ashes and use them again throughout Lent during your family prayer times to remind you of your Lenten promises.]



There are many sites where you can find Child-friendly resources and also ideas for teenagers, including:

<https://www.catholicicing.com/lenten-activities-for-children/> (including an excellent 'Lenten Journey' day-by-day map)

<https://www.pinterest.com/leenaprindle/lent-with-children-youth/>

<http://catholicyouthwork.com/latest-resources/lenteaster/>

The CAFOD site, <https://cafod.org.uk/>, has lots of ideas and resources, including a Lenten (lockdown-proof) 'Walk for Water'.

You may wish, either individually or as a family, especially with older teenagers, to look at the full scripture readings for the day:

Joel 2: 12 – 18.

Psalm 50: 3-6,12-14, 17,

2 Corinthians 5: 20 – 6: 2.

Matthew 6: 1 – 6, 16 – 18

Traditionally Catholics abstained from meat on Fridays (and in earlier times on Wednesdays too) – the tradition of 'Fish on Fridays'. As more and more of young people and families are interested, even passionate, about green issues and turn to vegetarian or even vegan diets, this small change in diet could be an acknowledgement of the need for change.

Fridays mark the day of the Crucifixion of Christ, for the life of the world. We are called to take our small part in making a difference.

'The Year of the Word' continues – see <https://rcadc.org/yow/> for more information, including a summer programme of 'zoom' talks on Scripture.