

**THE BLESSING
+
DISTRIBUTION OF
ASHES
ON
ASH WEDNESDAY**

a Service of Word and Sign
for use in Families in Lockdown at Home.



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent.

Lent is a 40 day pilgrimage of 'repentance': 'turning back' 'seeking again'.

We set out together to prepare for the celebration of Easter, the central feast of our year, when we celebrate and renew our Baptism into the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and Resurrection.

To mark the beginning of this journey, we use the ashes of last year's Palms as a sign of a shared aim and purpose, and a reminder of individual sin and falling away from the paschal life and way of Christ since last year's renewal.

If you have palms or palm crosses from last year, or from previous years, these could be used to mark or touch each member of the family, instead of ash.

Or, if it is possible to do so safely, outside in a garden, two or three palms could be burned to make ash. This might be part of Shrove Tuesday celebrations in the family.

(To prepare ash: first 'lightly bake' the palms in the oven, to dry them a little. Then cut them up into smaller pieces and place them in an old baking tray or a [large] tin and light, out of doors and at a safe distance from anything combustible. Allow to burn out and the ashes to cool before use. If you have no palms, you may simply burn a little paper.)

On Ash Wednesday the Family could agree to a suitable moment for an Ash Wednesday service. (after a shared fast-day meal might be a convenient time)

Gathering + Preparation

(The Family gathers. Roles are distributed among the members of the family)

(As an Introduction, you may play the hymn 'Come back to me with all your heart' by Gregory Norbert: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJ20I-UhTec> (with changing visuals with words along bottom of screen) or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfccyT1k5vc> (with the whole verses on screen).

Leader: Let us begin together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All: Amen.

Leader: May the Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Opening Prayer: *(from the Roman Missal)*

Leader: Let us pray:
O Lord, as we begin this campaign of Christian service with holy fasting,
to take up battle against spiritual evils,
Grant that we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint,
through our Lord Jesus Christ your son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever,

All: Amen.

LITURGY of the WORD

*(According to the age and acquiescence of the children,
you may wish to drop either one or both of the first two readings,
and concentrate on the teaching of Our Lord in the Gospel)*

Reader:

A Reading from the Prophet Joel

Joel 2: 12 – 18.

‘Now, Now! – It is the Lord who speaks –
come back to me with all your heart,
fasting, weeping, mourning.’

Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn,
turn to the Lord your God again,
for he is all tenderness and compassion,
slow to anger, rich in graciousness,
and ready to relent.

Who knows if he will not turn again, will not relent,
will not leave a blessing as he passes;
oblation and libation for the Lord our God?

Sound the trumpet in Zion!

Order a fast,

proclaim a solemn assembly,

call the people together, summon the community,
assemble the elders,

gather the children, even the infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom, and the bride her alcove,
let the ministers of the Lord lament: Let them say:

Spare your people, Lord!

Do not make your heritage a thing of shame,
a byword for the nations.’

Why should it be said among the nations

‘Where is their God?’

Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land,
took pity on his people.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

Reader:

A Reading from the second letter of Saint Paul
to the Corinthians

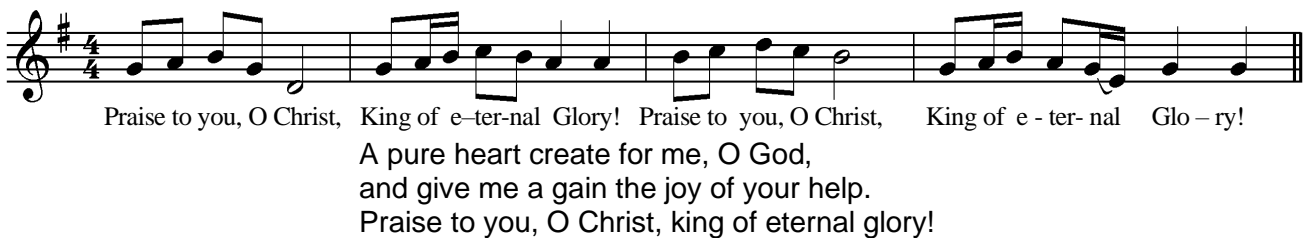
5: 20 – 6: 2.

We are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: Be reconciled to God. for our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God. As his fellow workers, we beg you once again not to neglect the grace of God that you have received. For he says: At the favourable time, I have listened to you; on the day of salvation I came to your help. Well, now is the favourable time, this is the day of salvation.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4HZS2-W6Y8>



Reader: The Lord be with you

All: And with your Spirit.

Reader: A Reading form the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

6: 1 – 6, 16 – 18

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by

yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and dishevelled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

BLESSING + GIVING of ASHES

(from the Roman Missal)

Leader: Let us prayerfully ask God our Father to bless
These ashes / these Palms
as we use them as a sign of penitence.

Lord,
we are sinner who asks for your forgiveness;
bless us +

(the leader makes a sign of the cross over all gathered)
as we receive these marks of our repentance.
May we keep this season of Lent
in preparation for the joy of our Easter Baptism,
through Christ our Lord.

The Leader sprinkles the ashes / palms with holy water, if it is available.

The Leader says:

Repent, and believe in the Gospel

or

Remember that you are dust
and to dust you shall return

The Leader then sprinkles a little of the ash on the head of each person present.

If there are no ashes, the leader touches the forehead of each person with a palm.

If there are no palms, the leader may make a sign of the cross on the forehead of each person with his/her thumb.

Conclusion

Leader: As we set out to keep Lent together,
let us join in the prayer Jesus taught us, our family prayer:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven,

Leader: So we set out in the peace of Christ,
to make our Lenten journey following Jesus,
through his death to the resurrection and Easter glory.

All: Thanks be to God!

Quiet music might be played as the family sit together, or gradually disperse.