



Ash Wednesday

Short Prayer Service for Home – to distribute ashes

Sacred Space

Before Ash Wednesday involve the members of your household/ your family in creating a sacred Lenten space in your home - Use some symbols in your space – such as a cross, candles, a bible or some significant symbol for you. You can add to it as the weeks go by, significant prayers, events, people, symbols, etc.

The colour for Lent is Violet so you may like to use that colour in your sacred space. You could even create your own mini desert using some sand and stones. Be creative yet keep it simple. Let it be your family's little oasis, sanctuary, during Lent.

If using some stones, why not put words on them, e.g. *busyness, self-centeredness, consumerism, ...* that reflect some of the attitudes that you need to let go of,and some of the attitudes you need to develop during this time of Lent, e.g. *courage, openness, awareness, kindness, joy, patience ...*

Place the bowl of ashes in the sacred space.

[Easiest way to put words on stones is to write or print the word on a coloured piece of paper and use clear sellotape to stick it on to the stone].



You can collect a packet of ashes from your local parish before hand and when you are ready to begin the simple prayer service put them in a bowl and add a drop of Holy Water.

Gathering Presence

Set a time, before the day begins maybe, when the members of your household or family will gather together. Take a few minutes (*maybe use a piece of quiet music*) just to quiet yourselves.

As you begin

We take the beginning of this time of prayer to gather ourselves.....to recall the invitation of Lent to turn back to God, to follow anew the way of Jesus and allow the Spirit to guide our living....

Take a moment to ask each gathered what this journey of Lent means to them.

When you are ready to begin –

We begin our prayer **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen**

Lord, thank you for bringing us together that we can journey this Lenten journey supported and in the care of each other. Centre us in you, root our life and our relationships in your way of living, deepen your presence in us.

We close our eyes for a moment and listen to a short scripture reading

(Maybe have another family member read)

Scripture Reading – is take from the book of Joel Chapter 2 verses 12-18

'But now - declares Yahweh - come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.'

Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to Yahweh your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love.

The word of the Lord, **Thanks be to God**

Pause.....then invite others to reflect or maybe share a line or two of what the reading meant to them.

What is the Lord inviting me to in this reading and as I begin this Lent?

Pause....

Where have I seen and felt compassion?

Pause.....
Where have I seen and felt God's love?
Pause.....

Distributing the Ashes

We take a moment to re-commit ourselves to following Jesus Christ, to love, to compassion and to witnessing to this for each other and our community during this Lent

Lord, as we are marked with these ashes, may we turn away from sin and grow in faithfulness to your gospel.

Each person then places ashes on the forehead of the person next to them saying:

Turn away from sin and believe the Good News!

Reflection

When you have finished distributing the ashes it might be helpful to read the following reflection when the distribution of ashes is over – This reflection is read slowly by one person... or a different member of the family could take a verse each.

Lent is a time to learn to travel light, to clear the clutter from our crowded lives, and find a space, a desert.

Deserts are bleak: no creature comforts, only a vast expanse of stillness, sharpening awareness of ourselves and God.

Uncomfortable places, deserts. Most of the time we're tempted to avoid them, find good reason to live lives of ease, cushioned by noise from self-discovery. Clutching at world's success to stave off fear,

but if we dare to trust the silence to strip away our false security, God can begin to grow his wholeness in us

fill up our emptiness, destroy our fears, give us new vision, courage for the journey and make our desert blossom like a rose.

By Ann Lewin

Take a few moments silence

Then, for a few moments, invite anyone to share a prayer for the Lent ahead, for the day ahead, for family members, those sick or ill, etc.

When all have shared their prayers

We bring all our prayers together mindful of our God, who calls us to live lives of compassion and love, as one family together we say together,

Our Father

Our Final prayer

God of blooming deserts, encourage us to enter together the space of this Lenten time, draw us into the desert of our own lives, where you alone can destroy our fears, renew our hope and give us passion and energy for the journey of life that we make together. Let us always be true witnesses of your love and compassion.

We make this prayer through our brother Christ your Son. ***Amen.***

We end our prayer together - **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen**