



Lenten Prayer Service incorporating the distribution of ashes

Sacred Space

Create a sacred space with a neutral coloured cloth....a large candlesome stones, with words on them, e.g. busyness, self-centeredness, , consumerism, ...that reflect some of the attitudes that we need to let go of,and some of the attitudes we need to develop during this time of Lent, e.g. courage, openness, awareness, kindness, joy, self-denial... 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 Perhaps do the attitudes we wish to develop in a life-giving colour and the attitudes we wish to lose in a dark colour.*].

Prayer Leader: **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen**

Prayer Leader: **We take time at the beginning of this time of prayer
to recall the invitation of Lent to turn back to God,
to follow anew the way of Jesus
and to allow the Spirit to guide our living....**

**Lord,
centre us in you,
root our life in your way of living,
deepen your presence in us.**

Liturgy of the Word

Joel 2:12-18

Reader 1: **A reading from the prophet Joel**
'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

Responsorial Psalm

Reader 1: **Have mercy, Lord, cleanse me from all of my sin.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your kindness;
in your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt,
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offences truly I know them.
my sin is always before me:
“Against you, you alone have I sinned,
what is evil in your sight I have done.”

A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your Holy Spirit.

Give me again the joy of your help,
with a spirit of fervour sustain me.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Reader 2: **A reading from the second letter to the Corinthians** *2 Cor 5:20 – 6:2*

We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.” See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

The word of the Lord

Prayer Leader: **A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew** *Matt 6:1-6, 16-18*

Jesus said to his disciples, “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 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. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

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. But 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.

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. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so 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.

Pause

Prayer Leader: **We take a moment to hear deep within our hearts
the invitation to come to God, who is gracious and compassionate**

Pause

**and to be sincere in our fasting, and our alms-giving,
and our prayer this Lent**

Pause

We make our Lenten promise to God silently in our own hearts....

Pause

Prayer Leader: **We come forward to be marked by these ashes,
a reminder that we wish to turn away from sin in our lives,
and to live like followers of Jesus Christ**

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

*People come forward to those distributing ashes and receive the ashes. The persons distributing ashes, place ashes on the forehead of those coming forward, making the sign of the cross on their forehead, saying to each person: **Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel.** It might be helpful to have some music playing during this time.*

After people have received the ashes, invite people to sit for a moment.

Reader 2: 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.

Ann Lewin

Prayer of the Faithful

Reader 1: For all Christian people as we begin this season of Lent - may we deepen
our relationship with you, Lord and with others. ***Lord, hear us***

For all leaders that they may have the courage to grow in faithfulness to
your Gospel, and the courage to be instruments of change. ***Lord, hear us***

For all who experience exclusion or whose lives are marred by injustice.
Lord, hear us

For all who live in places of war and conflict in our world, remembering
especially ???????? ***Lord, hear us***

For all who are sick. ***Lord, hear us***

Prayer Leader: **Called as sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ, we pray to our Father as we
say: *Our Father***

Prayer Leader: **God of love,
encourage us to enter the space of this Lenten time,
draw us into the desert of our own lives,
where you alone can destroy our fears
and give us passion and energy for the journey of life.
We make this prayer through Christ your Son.**

All: **Amen**

Prayer Leader: **May God bless us.**

All: **Amen.**