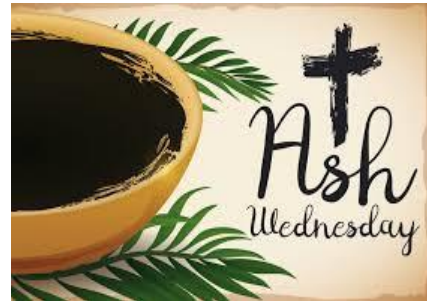


Ash Wednesday Liturgy of the Word with Ritual of Ashes (especially for younger families)



Creating the Sacred Space:

If possible set up the sacred space with some of the following:

- On one side, some cress and sand to represent the desert/wilderness experience of Lent but also of COVID that we are living now
- Some stones with words representing what we have experienced during COVID e.g. Isolation, Separation, Loneliness, No Hugs or other words that speak to our present experience
- A bare tree in the desert with white crosses hung from it, representing those who have died during COVID
- On the other side, signs of new life and hope e.g. daffodils or other flowers of Spring
- Symbols/ Words/ Phrases that represent actions we can take to reach out to others: e.g. One of the *An Post* Cards or other home made card e.g. *Thinking of You*, a Trócaire box, old mobile phone, headings or pictures from newspapers of frontline workers or other images representing those helping others.
- A pair of sandals or cut-outs of footprints are placed between the Desert side of the sacred space representing the journey we are called to make this Lent.
- A card on which are printed in large letters the prayer:
"Turn our hearts to you, O God, and to each other"

Before the Liturgy Begins: Oíve

(This is said by any person before the liturgy begins)

This evening, as you join with us in the liturgy of the Word and blessing of Ashes, we invite you to gather some symbols of Lent in your own home and perhaps keep them displayed over the coming weeks. Of course, central to this day is the ritual around ashes, so if you have collected some of the ashes from the church put in on a small glass bowl or saucer in the centre of the table. Light a candle if you have one. And place the Trócaire box beside the ashes in the centre. If you have a family bible, place it in the centre also. If you haven't all of these symbols don't worry. We will make do with what we have.

1. Gathering Rite

Music or Suitable Hymn is Sung

Turn our hearts to You, O God
With You, there is healing,
Wholeness and forgiveness,
Freedom from fear, lasting peace.

Have mercy on me, God of love...
Lead me in the path of justice;

You have placed your truth in my heart, O God.
Teach me wisdom of heart.

Enfold me in the arms of love...
Restore in me the joy of your saving grace.

Bishop Fintan: The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God
and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

Bishop Fintan: Words of Welcome

Lent is a very different experience for all of us this year. It's true to say that for many people it's been like Lent for most of the past year. It has truly been a desert or wilderness experience where our normal lives and routines have been turned upside down. It has lasted more than 40 days and likely will go on for 40 more at least.

The **Loughnane Family** have prepared some symbols of what we are living at this time and will place them in our sacred space now. Notice that on one side of the sacred space we have created a desert space. What's life like in your desert space? Let's listen to what the **Loughnane Family** put in their desert space.

Gillian

Into our sacred space, we bring some symbols and words which represent our experience during lockdown. We have written some of our experiences and the experiences of other families that we know on stones and cards and we bring these forward now.

Every evening we listen to the news and hear about all the people who are sick or who have died because of COVID.

- **James.** bring a stone with the word 'illness'. It represents all the people we know who have been ill because of COVID
- **Alyse.** brings a white cross to represent all who have died and especially those we have known ourselves.
- Because of the COVID we haven't been able to meet with our Granny and Grandad or with other families or with our friends.
- **Ladise** brings a card which reminds us of those we would love to be with but cannot. The card says 'We Miss You'
- *Other symbols which speak to the experience of lockdown may be added.*

Bishop Fintan: We will bring some other symbols too that we will use in our time of prayer together.

Gillian:

- Today is the first day of Lent and **Aoife** brings a bowl of ashes we will use during this time of prayer. *(Place on the Altar)*
- As a family, we have tried to get outdoors as much as possible. We have noticed that Spring is here and we see signs of new life around us. **James.** brings some daffodils (or other flowers) that are just coming into bloom. Lent too is a season when we are called to grow. *(Place on the altar)*
- We have noticed that the days are lengthening and the light is getting stronger. This reminds us that the light is always stronger than the darkness. **Alyse** brings the candle to the altar to represent Jesus, the light of life, who is always with us when we gather in his name. *(Place on the Altar)*
- Sometimes, you can really see the love and goodness in people's hearts. We saw the love in Adam when he showed us his virtual hug on the *Late Late Show*. We made one of Adam's hearts ourselves and **Ladise** brings it to the Sacred Space now. It represents all the love and goodness that we have seen since the COVID began. Lent is a time when we are called to grow in love of God and of each other.

Bishop Fintan: There's just one other symbol which the N family will bring to the altar. It's a very important one for today. Let's see what they bring:

Gillian: Aoife brings our last symbol. It's a pair of sandals and some footprints. These represent the journey we begin today, the journey of Lent, a journey of growing in love together.

Bishop Fintan: Thanks to the **Loughnane family** for leading us in our Gathering Rite. As **Gillian** said, we are beginning a journey today, a journey of growing in love. We recognise that we don't always live the way of love. In song, we ask God's mercy in the words of a very ancient hymn called the Kyrie.

Cantor: You are Lord of all creation... Kyrie Eleison

All: Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie ... Eleison

Cantor: You Our Hope, be our Word, our consolation, Christe Eleison

All: Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie ... Eleison

Cantor: You shield our steps in the light of God's salvation, Kyrie Eleison

All: Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie ... Eleison

Bishop Fintan: Let us pray...

Gracious God,
in our hearts you have written a promise of love
which can never be broken.

In this Lenten season of grace,
open our hearts to the warmth of your love
which changes our hearts and our lives.

Open us to you and to others,
especially when we are tired, weary and disheartened,
when we forget or doubt your love,
or when we are anxious and fearful.
This we ask, this we seek, in Jesus name. Amen.

2. Liturgy of the Word

Gospel Acclamation

Bishop Fintan: I invite all of you joining us at home to stand and all of here to stand as
we

welcome the Gospel.

Cantor: Praise and honour, honour and glory,

Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark:

Jesus appeared in Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God.
'The time has come', he said 'and the Kingdom of God is close at hand'.
Repent and believe in the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord

Cantor: Praise and honour, honour and glory,

Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.

After the Gospel - Reflection, interacting with the family around the Altar.

Bishop Fintan: I said at the beginning that we are already living Lent. To keep people safe in our community we have already given up so much. So much of the normal things of life, we simply cannot do.

Bishop Fintan asks the family what things they have had to give up, because of COVID? *They will have their own list but will probably include the following:*

- Can't go to school and be with our friends.
- Can't visit our Granny and Grandad.
- Can't go to the shops ... Can't play sports or go to matches.

Every family has its own story. Some families have very hard stories. Some families had people sick and they were unable to be with them. Some have had family funerals and were unable to be with their loved ones in their time of sadness.

So, we've given up a lot already...

Bishop Fintan picks up footsteps already placed on the altar?

(Or the sandals in the Sacred Space).

What are these? (Footprints)

What do they remind you of? (Take suggestions from children).

We can use these footprints to move, to begin a journey...

(place them one by one in front of each other so that they begin to look like a path).

- God invites us on a journey. In the Gospel we read today, Jesus says 'Repent'. It really means 'Turn your life around'.

It's a journey away from – and it's a journey towards ...

When we move away from something ... we turn our backs ...

The journey we are on, is about moving away from, or turning on back on, whatever doesn't help us to grow as people or to grow in love.

Ask the family present: What kind of things stop us from growing in love?

- But it's not only about turning our backs on what prevents us from growing, today is also about **the journey of turning towards.**

God asks us not to think only of ourselves, but to think also of others.

God calls us to turn towards others, to move towards other people.

Not to be so preoccupied with or only concerned about ourselves, but to turn towards others in some way, even in small ways.

With generous hearts, wanting to reach out to them and help them.

When we turn towards other people, our hearts are opened.

When we turn towards other people, we turn towards God.

We can't do it on our own either. We need God's help
So this year our prayer for Lent is

'Turn our hearts to you and to one another.'

A card with these words in large writing is held up

Bishop Fintan now places this card on the altar for all to see. Bishop Fintan invites the family to repeat these words with him

'Turn our hearts to you and to one another.'

How can we turn towards others?

- With little acts of kindness.
- Thinking of the others with whom we live within our families ... perhaps showing kindness to them
- Thinking of others who have less than we have ... *Bishop Fintan picks up the Trócaire box.* It's not just putting in some money but finding out about the people and the country you are supporting with your money. Being interested in them
- Thinking of Neighbours or other people we know of who might be lonely ... sending them a card – whatever helps to let them know we are thinking of them
- Taking on a Lenten Project. Whatever helps us to reach out.

Give the children around the altar some footprints. Invite those present to think about what steps they might take this Lent. Invite them to bring home the footprints and to write one or two steps they will take this Lent to reach out to someone to help them. Know that when you do it to this person, you do it to God.

Bishop Fintan invites those linking in to take a few quiet moments at home to think about how they will reach out to others, what steps they will take.

While this is happening the cantor sings:

Open My Eyes, Lord

Help me to see your face

Open my eyes, Lord

Help me to see

Open my ears, Lord

Help me to hear your voice

Open my ears, Lord

Help me to hear

Open my ears, Lord

Help me to hear your voice

Open my ears, Lord

Help me to hear

(Jesse Manibusan)

3. The Ritual with Ashes

Bishop Fintan: Does anyone know where the ashes we use today come from?

Leave time for responses. If no one responds, tell the family:

Bishop Fintan: The ashes we use today are made from the palms used on Palm Sunday last year. The left-over palms are collected and put away and at the approach of Lent they are taken out and burnt until they turn to ashes.

Blessing of Ashes (Simplified)

Bishop Fintan prays a blessing over the ashes.

Father,
we gather in your presence on this Ash Wednesday,
to ask your help in growing in love of you and of each other.
Bless these ashes, Lord,
and make them a sign to the world
of our desire to grow in love,
and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus your Son.

All: Amen.

The ashes are sprinkled with holy water in silence. Bishop Fintan then continues:

We are not alone on this journey; we make it together. So, as we start out on the journey, we mark each other with the ashes and with the sign of the cross as a way of saying we will support each other; we will encourage each other along the way.

The family here in the church will now mark each other with the Sign of the Cross using the ashes. I invite you to do the same at home. Make the Sign of the Cross on the person beside you and as you do so I invite you to say: **'Turn your heart to God and to others.'**

Bishop Fintan: Let's say the words together: **'Turn your heart to God and to others.'**

(If you have no ashes at home, just make the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the person beside without using ashes).

While the Ashes are being distributed the following refrain is sung:

Turn our hearts to You, O God
With You, there is healing
Wholeness and forgiveness,
Freedom from fear, lasting peace.

The Prayer of the Faithful

Bishop Fintan: Gathered together to mark the start of Lent, we pray asking for God's help to turn towards him and towards others during Lent. The response to each prayer is, 'God of love, turn our hearts to you and to others.'

All: **God of love, turn our hearts to you and to others.**

Reader: Loving God, you want us to be close to you. May we find quiet time to pray to you, just like Jesus did. May we listen to you in our hearts during this special time of Lent. God of love turn our hearts to you and to others.

All: **God of love, turn our hearts to you and to others.**

Reader: Loving God, you want us to care for each other. Help us to be kind to those around us during this special time of Lent. God of love, turn our hearts to you and to others.

All: **God of love, turn our hearts to you and to others.**

Reader: Loving God, you want us to be unselfish and not to be greedy. Help us to be generous in our giving and sharing during this special time of Lent, especially those who are in need. God of love, turn our hearts to you and to others.

All: **God of love, turn our hearts to you and to others.**

Bishop Fintan: We take a moment to prayer quietly in our own hearts.

Our Father

Reflection:

Bishop Fintan: Before our final prayer, **Anne Marie** will read a reflection for us.

Anne Marie: In our Churches the pews are empty,
In our towns and villages, the roads are quiet,
We are all at home and our minds are flooded.

Friends and neighbours are showing they care,
A great compassion alive in our community,
A trace of the divine DNA in our hearts.

This tangible wave of care
Is most obvious at times of suffering.
The impulse to love calls us beyond ourselves.

Acts of kindness, compassion and love
are hints of the God who came among us.

In our fragile, hurting world,
God's mystery made known in our reaching out.

Friends and neighbours are showing they care,
Each going that extra mile for one another.
Let us keep on caring in our families and communities,
For we are swimming together in the ocean of divinity.

Bishop Fintan: This Lent may we find the trace of the divine DNA in our hearts.

4. Concluding Rite

Final Prayer

Gracious God,
Walk with us on this journey of Lent.
Be our companion and guide
as we walk the path of love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Blessing & Dismissal:

Bishop Fintan: May the God who loves us with a tender love
keep us safe from harm and bless us with strength for the journey.

All: Amen.

Bishop Fintan: May Christ, the human face of God, fill our hearts with lasting joy.

All: Amen.

Bishop Fintan: May the Spirit of God shine light on our path and guide our steps.

All: Amen.

Bishop Fintan: May almighty God bless us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

Bishop Fintan: Go out in peace, marked by love for all God's people.

All: Thanks be to God.

Final Hymn

Love is the touch of intangible joy,
Love is the force that no fear can destroy;
Love is the goodness we gladly applaud:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the lilt in a lingering voice;
Love is the hope that can make us rejoice;

Love is the cure for the frightened and flawed:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the light in the tunnel of pain;
Love is the will to be whole once again;
Love is the trust of a friend on the road:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the Maker and Spirit and Son;
Love is the kingdom their will has begun;
Love is the pathway the saints all have trod:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

(Tune: Be Thou My Vision)