

Ash Wednesday at Home with Children +

Supplies needed: ashes for imposition, and Alleluia/Remember banner (alternatives suggested below).

BEGINNING IN PRAYER

The following greeting is said while crossing yourself (moving your fingertips from your forehead, to your belly button, then to one shoulder, then the other shoulder).

God be with us,
Jesus is present with us in our home.

Let us pray.

Amazing and life-giving God, you love everything and everyone you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are sorry: Create and make in us new and sorry hearts, that we, admitting what we have done wrong and really wanting to do better, may be forgiven because of your great mercy and grace, and given a chance to try again; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SAYING FAREWELL TO THE "ALLELUIA"

There is a tradition in the church, as a way of setting aside Lent as a time that is different than other times in church life, that we choose to stop doing some things that bring us joy (like not eating sweets or not watching television) so we can focus on our relationship with God. We call this "fasting".

When we fast during Lent this can help us get closer to God and make the celebration of Easter extra special. As a symbol of this tradition, we as a whole church community give up, or fast from, saying "Alleluia"*

One way to show this shift is to say or sing farewell (goodbye) to the Alleluia on Shrove Tuesday. We can also bury the Alleluia in a jar (tomb), or hide our Alleluias with our Remember banner.

At this time, if you made your Alleluia/Remember banner, please change your banner from the Alleluia side to be hidden and show the Remember side for Ash Wednesday and Lent. If you haven't made a banner yet, you can do so now.

Alternatively, you can write/draw Alleluia on a piece of paper and "bury" it. Or you could simply see how many times you can say Alleluia in 30 seconds, or sing a favorite song with Alleluias, such as "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" (1982 H 711).

*[*Sometimes instead of fasting we try a new thing (spiritual practice or discipline) like praying together as a family once a day, reading the Bible daily, or making different choices about what items we buy, to name a few. Taking on a practice also helps us get closer to God and can make Easter extra special!]*

READING FROM THE BIBLE

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew 6:1-6, 16-20

International Children's Bible

Jesus said, "Be careful! When you do good things, don't do them in front of people to be seen by them. If you do that, then you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"When you give to the poor, don't be like the hypocrites. They blow trumpets before they give so that people will see them. They do that in the synagogues and on the streets. They want other people to honor them. I tell you the truth. Those hypocrites already have their full reward. So when you give to the poor, give very secretly. Don't let anyone know what you are doing. Your giving should be done in secret. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

"When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. They love to stand in the synagogues and on the street corners and pray loudly. They want people to see them pray. I tell you the truth. They already have their full reward. When you pray, you should go into your room and close the door. Then pray to your Father who cannot be seen. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

"When you give up eating, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They make their faces look strange to show people that they are giving up eating. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward. So when you give up eating, comb your hair and wash your face. Then people will not know that you are giving up eating. But your Father, whom you cannot see, will see you. Your Father sees what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

"Don't store treasures for yourselves here on earth. Moths and rust will destroy treasures here on earth. And thieves can break into your house and steal the things you have. So store your treasure in heaven. The treasures in heaven cannot be destroyed by moths or rust. And thieves cannot break in and steal that treasure. Your heart will be where your treasure is.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CONFESSION AND SEEKING FORGIVENESS**

We are human: we try to love as God loves us, but we often fail.

Jesus, we confess that we do not always do things right, or know the right thing to do. We sometimes struggle to be your light in the world. We are sorry for the people we have hurt, and the times we make wrong choices. Help us let go of our wrong doings, and renew us with your love.

God says to us, "I love you for just being you, not for what you do." Know that we are loved and forgiven. Jesus invites us to turn to God and learn how to try again and walk in love. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO A HOLY LENT AND IMPOSITION OF ASHES

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence, (a time of being sorry) and fasting (a time of focusing on God). This season of Lent provided a time in which new Christians were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of really big sins, had been separated from the church were brought back and forgiven. The whole church would focus on being sorry and making holy choices together.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by thinking about our choices and by recognizing things we have done wrong; by prayer, self-denial and intentionally focusing on God; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.

Pray the following prayer over the ashes.

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: help these ashes be a reminder to us that we are your creation and we will always be your creation. Everything we do should show that we are yours in how we live, in how we die, in how we think and treat other people. Amen.

Mark a sign of the cross on each other's heads (or hands as an alternative), saying:

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Once everyone has been imposed with ashes, continue with the following prayer.

Grant, most merciful Lord to us your faithful people, forgiveness and peace, that we may live to serve you every day. **Amen.**

BLESSINGS AND DISMISSAL

Each take turns saying to one another:

Know that you are a blessing, now go be a blessing to others. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

† This service was created by the Rev. Jessica Holthus, inspired by and adapted from the Rev. Shivaun Wilkinson's creative resource [*Ash Wednesday at Home with Elementary and Preschool Children*](#), with permission.

**Adapted from *Daily Prayers for all Seasons*.