

ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENTEN RESOURCES 2021

There are three particular actions in our annual liturgies that draw people in great numbers – the Blessing of Throats, the Imposition of Ashes and the Veneration, by kissing, of the Wood of the Cross. Within our current restrictions reaching out to hug or touch are not recommended for the health and safety of all. As a Christian Community we have been innovative in finding ways to celebrate key moments despite limitations. Ash Wednesday presents us with another challenge.

At our recent online liturgy sessions, we heard a variety of ideas from different parishes and we ourselves proposed the following:

- Invite people to burn last year's palm branch
- take ashes from the fire grate
- gather some earth from the garden.

These are then placed on a dish. At the same moment during the parish online Ash Wednesday celebration people can ask the Lord to bless their own offering with holy water using the formula attached. Alternatively, the celebrant can offer a blessing from a distance. If people within a household 'bubble' are present, ashes can be freely distributed while observing the sanitising guidelines as usual. Attached is the relevant text with a detailed formula for the signing of the senses at this moment. This will extend the ceremony and enrich the sense of the domestic church in action.

We also attach resources in PDF format for the Adaptation of the Rites of Christian Initiation as a parish Lenten retreat. In addition, we offer samples of Services of Reconciliation in a variety of styles. All this material is available on our website www.litmus.dublindiocese.ie under Updates.

The Trócaire resources are also very helpful as they link prayer and action for justice. Father Joe Jones has generously shared his 'Acts of Love' with us and he is happy to have it distributed for those who will find it enriching for their communities. You might be also interested in the series of online conversations – Let's Live Lent – Bringing the Lenten Gospels to Life in cooperation with the Office for Evangelisation starting 16 February (Shrove Tuesday) – bring your own pancake. Details attached.

FORMULA FOR THE BLESSING OF ASHES DURING MASS ON ASH WEDNESDAY

Blessing of Ashes

After the Homily, the PRIEST, standing with hands joined, says:

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly ask God our Father
that he be pleased to bless
with the abundance of his grace these ashes,
which we will put on our heads in penitence.

After a brief prayer in silence, and, with hands extended, he continues:

O God, who are moved by acts of humility
and respond with forgiveness to works of penance,
lend your merciful ear to our prayers
and in your kindness
pour out the grace of your ✠ blessing
on your servants who are marked with these ashes,
that, as they follow the Lenten observances,
they may be worthy to come with minds made pure
to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of your Son.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The ashes are sprinkled with holy water.

The formula for the imposition of ashes on the head is:

Repent, and believe in the Gospel.

Or:

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

AS WE SIGN MEMBERS OF OUR HOUSEHOLD ON ASH WEDNESDAY WITH ASHES WE COULD EXPAND MAKING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IN THIS WAY WHICH COMES TO US FROM THE RCIA RITUAL. IT CAN BE DONE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR ANY BODILY TOUCH. THERE IS AN OPTIONAL RESPONSE GIVEN HERE – OR IT COULD SIMPLY BE RECEIVED IN SILENCE. THIS COULD ALSO BE DONE AT MASS ON ASH WEDNESDAY.

SIGNING OF THE SENSES *One person stands in front of the other. As the leader says each prayer, the cross is traced/made over the person as indicated.*

Leader: Receive the sign of the cross on your forehead.

It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know and follow him.

Optional response: Christ will be your strength! Learn to know and follow him!

Receive the sign of the cross on your ears,
that you may hear the voice of the Lord.

Christ will be your ...

Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes,
that you may see the glory of God.

Christ will be your...

Receive the sign of the cross on your lips,
that you may respond to the word of God.

Christ will be your...

Receive the sign of the cross over your heart,
that Christ may dwell there by faith.

Christ will be your...

Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders,
that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

Christ will be your...

Receive the sign of the cross on your hands,
that Christ may be known in the work which you do.

Christ will be your...

Receive the sign of the cross on your feet,
that you may walk in the way of Christ.

Christ will be your...

We entrust ourselves to the sign of eternal life,
in the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.