

## An Ash Wednesday Prayer service

*Based on a liturgy from the 2005 parish Lenten pack  
created by the Diocesan Liturgy Commission.*

- Introductory words
- Blessing of ashes
- Joel 2:12-13.  
“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.
- Mark 6: 1-6, 16-18.  
Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.
- ‘Letting go & Letting God’:
  - In these or similar words: Consider what we are carrying that is a burden – what relationship, what expectation, what hurt. Consider that we all yearn to be let free from that which is too heavy to carry, but too important to forget. Consider that Jesus wants to be with us this Lenten time in a special way, and is offering to carry that burden for us for a time.
  - A basket of stones is passed around so each can take one.
  - When each person has a stone, and after some silence, the Serenity prayer is read slowly and gently (perhaps twice, so people can absorb it):



God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;  
the courage to change the things I can;  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with  
Him forever in the next. Amen.

*--Reinhold Niebuhr*

- An invitation to place this burden in Jesus arms for the time of Lent. Basket(s) left in front of the altar, so people can lay down their burdens if they wish to do so.
- As people place their burden down, they can take up a prayer card of ‘A cross in my pocket’

***Cross in My Pocket** by Mrs. Verna Mae Thomas*

I carry a cross in my pocket, a simple reminder to me  
 Of the fact that I am a Christian no matter where I may be.  
 This little cross is not magic, nor is it a good luck charm  
 It isn't meant to protect me from every physical harm.  
 It's not for identification for all the world to see  
 It's simply an understanding between my Savior and me.  
 When I put my hand in my pocket to bring out a coin or a key  
 The cross is there to remind me of the price He paid for me.  
 It reminds me, too, to be thankful for my blessings day by day  
 And to strive to serve Him better in all that I do and say.  
 It's also a daily reminder of the peace and comfort I share  
 With all who know my Master and give themselves to His care.  
 So, I carry a cross in my pocket reminding no one but me  
 That Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life if only I'll let Him be.

- Closing prayer. This or similar words: Lord, teach me this Lent to recognise you present in my life. Show me your grace in situations and relationships that I feel unable to carry alone, bless me as I place the daily burdens of my life in your arms this Lent.

Prayer

- O Jesus, you place on my forehead the sign of your saving Cross: “Turn from sin and be faithful to the gospel.” How can I turn from sin unless I turn to you? You speak, you raise your hand, you touch my mind and call my name, “Turn to the Lord your God again.” These days of your favor leave a blessing as you pass on me and all your people. Turn to us, Lord God, and we shall turn to you.
- Lord, The house of my soul is narrow; enlarge it that you may enter in. It is ruinous, O repair it! It displeases Your sight. I confess it, I know. But who shall cleanse it, to whom shall I cry but to you? Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord, and spare Your servant from strange sins. *St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)*
- The Jesus prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.