



Primary Collective Worship Resources

A Rite for Ash Wednesday and a Lenten Activity

Step 1: We gather

Begin this liturgy as you begin every session with the welcome in the meeting place. You might invite a priest to lead this session; or a teacher can lead it. Welcome everyone and explain that today is Ash Wednesday – the day that begins the season of Lent. On Ash Wednesday, Catholics go to church and receive ashes. The ashes are made from burning last year's palms (which we receive on Palm or Passion Sunday).

Explain that the ashes have been blessed, and that Catholics believe that all who receive them will be blessed too. Explain that the children will be invited forward and that either the Priests or the leader will make a cross with the ashes on the forehead of each person with this adapted prayer: "Listen to Jesus and be more like him".

Step 2: What the Bible says

Pause here to sing the refrain to Marty Haugan's "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard" The words are very suitable for Ash Wednesday. If you teach them the refrain and repeat it a couple of times, it will be a good opening to the giving and receiving of ashes.

Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, what God has ready for those who love him.
Spirit of God, come give us the mind of Jesus, teach us the wisdom of God.

Now, invite the children, if they want to participate, to copy you as you trace the sign of the cross on yourself with your thumb as we pray:

God be in my mind (sign the forehead)
God be on my lips (sign the lips)
And God be in my heart (sign the chest).

Holding the Bible, the leader reverently and clearly reads the Scripture to the whole group. We suggest using this simplified version of the Gospel of Matthew 6.16-18:

Jesus told the crowd:
When you pray, do not be like the show-offs
who love to stand and pray so that everyone sees them.
When you pray, go to your room,
close the door, and pray to God your Father in secret.
And God your Father will repay you.
Do not tell everyone what you are doing.
God sees what you are doing and he will reward you.

The reader says, "The Gospel of the Lord". The response is "Praise to you Lord Jesus".

The children can then be invited to come in procession to the priest or the teacher to be given their ashes. They may be given this adapted message: "Listen to Jesus and be like him".

You might play some music in the background as the children receive the ashes. "Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here" will work well.

Tell the children a little about the Bible passage they have just heard. Jesus was teaching a large crowd on a mountainside about how to live a good life in the eyes of God. One of the things he said was about prayer. He said that when people pray, they should do so quietly in private and not to show off to others how good they think they are. In the same way, when we give something up for Lent or when we do something kind or generous, we should not brag to others how good we are being. God sees everything we are doing and he will reward us.



As we hear God speaking to us in our prayer and in the Bible stories we hear, we learn more and more about Jesus and we can become like him.

Invite everyone to join in the prayer that Jesus taught:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Step 3: Our life experience

Ash Wednesday begins Lent, a time when Christians all over the world give things up in a time of preparation for Easter. They might pray, fast, give money to charity or give up something which they enjoy. For example, you might give up eating chocolates or something else you like to eat and give the money you save to charity. Be careful not to give up one thing (like Coca Cola) and replace it with something else (like Lemonade) – or give up watching TV but play on the computer instead.

Instead of giving something up, the children might consider promising to do something which will help them to be more like Jesus. For example, you might make a special effort to get along with someone you often argue with – or you might be kind to someone you don't like. You might offer to be more helpful at home.

Each child can be given a paper candle and they can be invited to write on the candle what they would like to promise to do in the next week to be more like Jesus. This is something they can do on each of the six Sundays during Lent. Invite them to share what kinds of things they might write on their candles.

Step 4: How God's word affects our lives

In this part of the session, the children can be given six candles starting with a small one and finishing with a large candle. As they promise each week to do something to be more like Jesus, they will see how their light grows more and more like him. [Alternatively, the children can be given a new larger candle each week.] The leader says: "I look forward to hearing how you get on with your growing light, how you are learning to love more as Jesus loves you."

The leader then says: "Let's reach out to grasp the hand of God and to shake each other's hands, as we say: "Peace be with you!" After offering the sign of peace, sing "Shalom, my friend, Shalom my friend, Shalom, Shalom, the peace of Christ I give you today." This will also double as the closing hymn for the liturgy.



Liturgy Sheet: Ash Wednesday

Opening Hymn

Eye has not seen, ear has not heard,
what God has ready for those who love him.
Spirit of God,
come give us the mind of Jesus,
teach us the wisdom of God.
(Repeat 3 times)

Listen to Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:
“When you pray, don’t be like the people
who love to stand and pray so that others may
see them.
When you pray, go to your room, close the
door, and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret
will repay you.
“And, when you give something up for Lent,
do not tell everyone what you are doing.
No, look cheerful so that only God sees
what you are doing and he will reward you.”

*The Gospel of the Lord.
R/ Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ*

*The priest says: “Let’s reach out to grasp the
hand of God and to shake each other’s
hands, as we say: “Peace be with you!”
While offering the sign of peace, sing:*

*“Shalom, my friend,
Shalom my friend, Shalom,
Shalom, the peace of Christ I give you today.”*

Preparing for the Ashes

*The priest invites the children to think about
what has been said, and to think of some of
the things they might do during Lent to
become more like Jesus.*

We pray together

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Closing hymn: repeat Shalom, my friend . . .



Lenten Activity

Week 1: Ash Wednesday. What will you do this week to be more like Jesus?



Week 2: Have you noticed your light is getting bigger? What will you promise to do this week to be more like Jesus?



Week 3: How are you doing with your promises? Is it easy to keep them all week? Make a new promise this coming week.



Week 4: Can you see how you are becoming more like Jesus? Are you being more loving?





Week 5: What are some of the things that are tempting you not to keep your promises? Ask Jesus for help!



Week 6: The light is now nearly as big as the light of Jesus, who was the light of the world.

