

Prayer Service for Individuals and Families to pray on Ash Wednesday and during Lent.

If circumstances permit, perhaps individuals or family members might sit at a table on which a lighted candle is placed.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Living God, you walk alongside us and speak to us through the Scriptures.

Your Son, Jesus Christ, listens to our hopes and fears and shows us how to live for one another.

Send us the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds so that we may be your witnesses throughout the world.

V. Your word is our path and your truth is our light.

R *This day and every day.*

Amen.

Almighty and eternal God, our refuge in every danger, to whom we turn in our distress;

in faith we pray look with compassion on the afflicted, grant eternal rest to the dead, comfort to mourners, healing to the sick, peace to the dying, strength to healthcare workers, wisdom to our leaders and the courage to reach out to all in love, so that, together, we may give glory to your holy name.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Psalm 50

R **Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

1. Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sins. **R**
2. My offences truly I know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned:
what is evil in your sight I have done. **R**
3. A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **R**
4. Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me.
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise. **R**

Possible points for reflection on the Psalm:

- As I try to read these words of the penitent in a contemplative way, I listen to my heart's desire for a phrase or word that speaks to me. Reading this sacred text again, I pause and reflect on what touches me.
- Perhaps it brings to mind a sense of sorrow for my own offences against God: times when I missed the mark with God or my fellow beings? I beg for God's mercy and compassion to blot out my lack of love.
- I may note the psalmist's trust in the richness of divine mercy and grace; a trust that is heartfelt and personal.

- I pray for the grace of knowing I am a loved sinner who desires a right relationship with God.
- I may end with a plea for the gifts and joy of God's Holy Spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness, and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Possible points for reflection on the Gospel passage:

- I read the words of the Gospel. Perhaps I choose to be led by the Holy Spirit to walk out into the wilderness with Jesus.
- What is it like to be alone with Jesus in his time of temptation.
- How do I feel, hearing, seeing and being with Jesus in this harsh setting?
- If I can bear it, I rest in compassionate, silent companionship with my Lord.
- What does the Lord want me to understand today? Perhaps I ask him.
- In time, I slowly bring my prayer to a close, thanking God for his presence.

Concluding Prayer - Prayer for Ash Wednesday

God our Father, on the day of Baptism we were claimed for Christ our Saviour by the sign of his Cross.

On this Ash Wednesday, and in this time of pandemic, we come before you, desiring to fulfil our baptismal promises, by dying to selfishness and by living for Christ. And so, we pledge ourselves, in this Lenten season, to pray, to fast, and to give alms.

Father, in your kindness, pour out your blessing upon us, as we make this threefold pledge:

Those present can repeat the following after the one leading the prayer; while making the pledge, the forehead is signed with the Cross, three times with the thumb.

- I pledge myself to a time of prayer each day – as I do so, I sign my forehead + with the sign of the Cross.
- I pledge myself to fast by denying myself some luxury – as I do so, I sign my forehead + with the sign of the Cross.
- I pledge myself to give alms this Lent, by supporting Trócaire, or some other charity – as I do so, I sign my forehead + with the Cross.

By your grace, may we keep this Lenten pledge, in preparation for the joy of Easter. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray as Jesus taught us:
Our Father.....

The Blessing

May the Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**