

This liturgy has been created to guide you through the readings, prayers, reflections and distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday. It is designed to be used with the **PC24 Secondary ASH WEDNESDAY PowerPoint Presentation** contained within the zip file downloaded from the Caritas Australia website.

You will require one leader and ten readers.

You might like to create a sacred space at the front of the gathering or include some special items to be carried forward in the procession. Some suggestions include:

- Purple linen as per the colour of the liturgical season
- Project Compassion posters and large donation boxes
- Symbols from each of the featured countries in Project Compassion 2024 (Philippines, Malawi, Samoa)

MAKE A PLEDGE

You may wish to ask students to write down a pledge prior to walking into the liturgy that incorporates the following phrase:

for all future generations

These can then be placed into a bowl in the sacred space after they receive their ashes, or at the start as students enter the liturgical space.

ADDITIONAL PROJECT COMPASSION RESOURCES FOR THE LITURGY

Additional resources that can be used during the liturgy include:

- [Project Compassion 2024 Prayer \(PPT\)](#)
- [Project Compassion Introduction Film](#)

These resources are available on the Project Compassion USB and on our Project Compassion website: www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion

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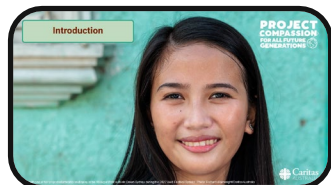
ASH WEDNESDAY LITURGY GUIDE



SLIDE 1: Ash Wednesday Liturgy – Project Compassion 2023

Music: Quiet instrumental music as the community settles.

Reader 1: Welcome to all our school family gathered here today: parents and carers, family members, students and teachers.



SLIDE 2: Introduction

Reader 2: As we gather to celebrate the beginning of the Church's season of Lent, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the _____ people. We acknowledge and offer our respect to their continuing culture and the contribution they make in the life of this region.

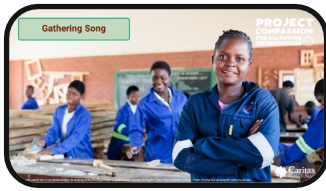
Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Church's season of Lent. The marking of the ashes on our foreheads on this day is a public expression of our faith and humility. It is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Through prayer, we come closer to God so that we are better able to realise the promises made for us at our baptism, to live justly as Jesus teaches us. Fasting joins us in solidarity with people experiencing poverty who often have no choice but to go without their basic human needs. Sharing what we have, or 'almsgiving', is a sign of our commitment to justice and our thanks for all that God has given us.

Lent prepares us for the season of Easter, the most important time in the Church's calendar. By praying, fasting and giving alms, we are reminded of Jesus's death and resurrection. Jesus brought the promise of hope to all people so that we may, "have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). As we live into that fullness, may we also be challenged to act with love and hope, now and for all future generations.

Please stand for our Gathering Song.

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SLIDE 3: Gathering Song

Music: This Is the Time by Michael Mangan

Processional (Optional)

Incense bearer leads procession to the altar. Students chosen for entrance procession walk in with the Gospel, a school candle, a Project Compassion poster, and the ashes, and places them on the sacred space. All precede the Celebrant/leader of the Ash Wednesday Liturgy.



SLIDE 4: Opening Prayer

Reader 1: Let us begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

God of love,
You care for us and all in our global family.
You want for us all life in its fullness.
Help us see the challenges faced by so many.
Help us look for justice.
Fill our hearts with love.
Turn our compassion to action.
Help us renew the world,
now and for all future generations.
We ask this in Jesus's name.

All: Amen

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SLIDE 5: Gospel Reading

Leader: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (6:1–6, 16–18, The Jerusalem Bible)

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘Be careful not to parade your good deeds before people to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So, when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win people’s admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and our God who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

‘When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let people know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

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SLIDE 6: Gospel Reflection

Leader: There is a time for everything:¹ times to speak; times to be quiet; times to mourn; times to be dance; times to let things go; times to gather things up; times to reflect and times to celebrate.

Towards the end of Lent, the Church celebrates Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday is a time of celebration. That day, we remember the part of Jesus's story when he was greeted by a large crowd on his way into Jerusalem. The people were so excited that they "spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." In celebration, they shouted, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"² But Ash Wednesday leads us into a quieter time. Today, ashes made from branches once used in praise and celebration remind us how, after Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, another crowd gathered and called for his death on a cross.

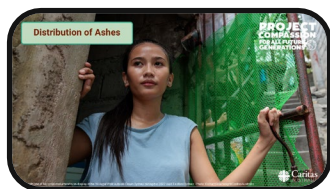
Ashes on our foreheads mark the beginning of our journey through Lent. This quieter time is a time to reflect on Jesus's life and suffering and the ways he continually showed compassion to those around him. It's also a time to reflect on our own lives and the lives of all in our human family and the rest of creation. Today, we pause to reflect on it all: life's good bits and life's quiet, difficult, challenging bits. We can ask: what experience or situation makes me want to celebrate? What makes me want to cry? What moves me to compassion? What actions will I take to make a difference – in my own life? in the lives of other people? in the living creation?

Fasting, almsgiving and prayer can help us to reflect.

When you receive ashes on your forehead today, let them be an encouragement to share compassion with others. Let the ashes remind you especially of the experiences of those who do not have access to the basic needs of human life. And, as you ask, 'What can I do to care for them?', remember that when we stand together as a global family, challenging ourselves to live and act with love and hope, we make a difference, just as Christ does, *now* and for all future generations.

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SLIDE 7: Distribution of Ashes

Leader:

Let us pray.

Bless us Lord as we receive these ashes as a reminder of our humility.

We ask for the forgiveness of our sins as we recall times when we have turned away from you and have not shown compassion to others.

We ask you to help us to be fair, peaceful and just as we go about your work in the world. Fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit as we stand with our global family.

All: Amen

Distribution of Ashes

Note: Ashes are placed in the in the form of a cross on the forehead with these words: "Repent and believe in the Gospel" or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Response: Amen

Suggested music:

Quiet instrumental music

Ashes to Ashes by Dan Schutte



SLIDE 8: Prayers of Intercession

Leader: Lord, we begin our Lenten journey marked with the sign of the cross as a symbol of your love and compassion for us. We come together in prayer, asking for your blessing and guidance.

Reader 3: We pray for our Church leaders Pope Francis,

_____ (insert Archbishop/Bishop's name) and _____

(insert Parish Priest's name), that they may follow you and be leaders of love and peace in the Church and the world. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

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SLIDE 8: Prayers of Intercession (continued)

Reader 4: We pray for our school community, that we may be inspired by the life and message of Christ to act in love, serving all who are in need of care. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader 5: We pray for the work of Caritas Australia, that through our support of Project Compassion, Caritas can work together with communities around the world, providing them with the skills needed to create a future they deserve. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader 6: We pray for Ronita, her husband and children in the Philippines. We celebrate their strengths and commitment to make a good life together. May they and all young people who face challenges feel the compassion and support of their community, Caritas Australia's in-country partners and us all. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader 7: We pray for Memory, and all young women in Malawi and around the world. We celebrate with them as they discover new skills, strengths and opportunities. May they continue to have what they need to thrive. And may they keep transforming the world for the better, for their own sake and for all who follow them. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader 8: We pray for Leaia, her family and community in Samoa. We celebrate their resourcefulness and care for each. May they have all they need to live safe, healthy and happy lives. And may we play our part, loving and caring for the Earth and each other generously and in ways that sustain all of creation. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

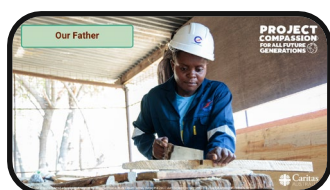
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SLIDE 8: Prayers of Intercession (continued)

Reader 9: We pray for our brothers and sisters who experience poverty and injustice wherever they are in the world. May we act in solidarity to end injustices everywhere – today and every day, for now and for all future generations. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.



SLIDE 9: Our Father

Leader: Let us now pray together in the words that Jesus taught us.
Our Father...



SLIDE 10: Project Compassion 2023: For All Future Generations

Reader 1: Once again, Caritas Australia's Project Compassion theme is *For All Future Generations*. It is about hope and reminds us that the good we do today impacts the lives of people tomorrow.

This year, *For all Future Generations* is inspired by the story of Moses and the burning bush in the book of Exodus.³ Called by God, Moses dared to face his challenges to make a difference in the lives of the people around him.

Project Compassion 2024 shares stories of three women from the Philippines, Malawi and Samoa. Though they face very different challenges in their day-to-day lives, they are all united by their dream of creating a better tomorrow for themselves and *for all future generations*.

During Lent, our challenge is to respond to these stories courageously, with a yes to God's call to us all, to act for social and ecological justice.

Project Compassion is a timely reminder during Lent that by putting our faith and compassion in action today, we have the power to create lasting change for generations to come.

³Exodus 3:1–20

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Optional: Show the [Project Compassion Introduction Film](#), available on the Caritas Australia website and on the Project Compassion USB. Or you might choose to show the [Project Compassion 2024 Prayer \(PPT\)](#).

All resources available at www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion



SLIDE 11: Closing Prayer

Leader:

God who walks with us,
be our guide this Lent.
Sustain us in our fasting, inspire us in our praying, lead us in our giving.
May we support the work of Caritas Australia,
walking shoulder to shoulder
with our sisters and brothers around the world
until all live life in fullness.
We pray this in the name of Christ.

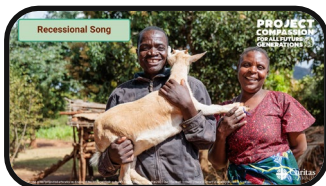
All: Amen



SLIDE 12: Sending Forth

Leader: Let us go forth signed with ash and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God.



SLIDE 13: Recessional Song

Suggested Music:

A New Heart for a New World by *Tricia Watts*
Go Make a Difference by *Steve Angrisano*
Christ Be Our Light by *Bernadette Farrell*
Here I Am Lord by *Dan Schutte*

