



Trinity Church
Ash Wednesday Family Service
February 17, 2021

Gather at the dinner table or in a circle around a table on which you have a candle, a small bowl or plate with the ashes, and wet paper towels for wiping your hands after imposing the ashes. Each person will also need a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

This is a group prayer. You may decide to have one person lead with others responding; or you may decide to take turns as speakers.

Opening

Holy and Loving God, You are merciful to everyone, and you love all the creatures you have created. Create in us new and humble hearts that we will have the courage to change our ways in order to recognize the harm we have done and the good that we are able to do. **Amen.**

A Reading from Scripture A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew

[drawn from Chapter 6, verses 1-15] *translation by Eugene Peterson, The Message*

Jesus said: Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't just call attention to yourself or pretend to feel something that you don't feel. It might be good theatre, but the God who made you won't be impressed. When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. . . Don't think about how it looks. Just do it. That is the way that God, who created you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you. . . . And when you pray . . . this is what I want you to do: Find a quiet, private place so you won't be tempted to pretend and you won't be distracted by thoughts of what other people may think of you. God knows better than you or anyone else what you really need. With this loving God, you can pray very simply. Just say what you mean: say thank you for what you have, ask for what you and the people you love need, and praise God. . . . In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Exhortation:

Today, all Christians enter into a time of prayer and self-offering. For forty days, we will try to live differently in order to prepare for our new life in Christ our Risen Lord. Let us begin today, joining with all Christians so that we may be committed to making a difference and to living differently because God loves us in Christ. We promise now to Pray, Fast, and Give.

Take a few minutes so that each person writes down

one thing to fast from,

one time each day to pray

one amount each week to give to Heifer International in the mite box.

You may decide to share your promises with each other or you may decide to keep them private. In either case, fold the paper to put in a place where you can remind yourself of what you have promised.

Prayers

Jesus, you came to call us to change our hearts. Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**
You promise forgiveness for the harm we have done. Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**
You give us new hearts to love and forgive others. Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

May God who has blessed these ashes pour grace into our hearts as we receive them on our foreheads.

At this time, one family member places ashes on the forehead of the other family members, saying each time:

Remember that you are human, and you are not perfect; do not expect others to be perfect.

Closing Prayer

In trust, we say the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Our Father, 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 others. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Remembering that today and on all the days that follow in Lent, God is calling us to change our hearts and to live differently. Let us open our hearts to receive and share the peace beyond understanding that comes only from our relationship with God. **Amen**

Sit quietly together for a few minutes before going your separate ways. Consider planning to fast from some activity as a family, to play Lentopoly together, and when each day during Lent you might say a prayer together.