

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that videos, images and external links contained in this resource may contain images, voices or names of people who have since passed away.

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 **PC23 Primary 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 2023 (Nepal, Australia, Vietnam, Zimbabwe)

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:

- **PC23 Prayer PowerPoint**
- **PC23 School Film**
- **Introducing Project Compassion for Primary Schools PowerPoint**

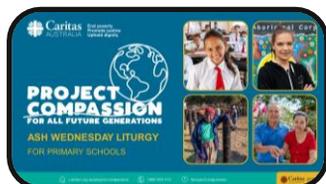
These resources are available on the Project Compassion USB and on our Project Compassion website: www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion

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SLIDE 1: Content Warning

Have this slide on screen for a brief time, as the community enters the sacred space and sits down.



SLIDE 2: 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 3: 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 the 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’ 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.



SLIDE 4: 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 5: Opening Prayer

Leader: 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' name.

All: Amen



SLIDE 6: Gospel Reading

This Gospel Reading, Matthew 6:1–4, is a translation from the Lectionary for Masses with Children).

It can be read by the Leader and two Readers.

Leader: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Leader: Jesus said to his disciples:

Reader 3: When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from God in heaven.

Reader 4: When you give to the poor, don't blow a loud horn. That's what showoffs do in the meeting places and on the street corners, because they are always looking for praise.

Reader 3: I promise you that they already have their reward.

Reader 4: When you give to the poor, don't let anyone know about it. Then your gift will be a secret. God knows what is done in secret and God will reward you.

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ



SLIDE 7: Gospel Reflection

Reader 2: Do you remember the part of Jesus' story when he was greeted by a large crowd on his way into Jerusalem? The Gospel writer describes how 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!"¹ (We remember this part of the story on Palm Sunday.) Today, on Ash Wednesday, ashes made from branches once used in praise and celebration remind us how, after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, another crowd gathered and called for his death on a cross.

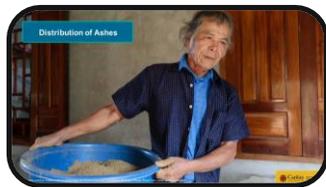
Ashes on our foreheads mark the beginning of our journey through Lent. Unlike Palm Sunday's loud and more visible signs of celebration, Ash Wednesday leads us into a quieter time of reflection. It's a time to think about Jesus' life and suffering and the ways he continually showed compassion and forgiveness to those around him, even those who treated him badly. It's also a time to think about our own lives and the ways we need to seek and share compassion and forgiveness with others too.

Fasting, almsgiving and prayer can help us do this. As Jesus says in today's Gospel reading, they're things to be done quietly, not for show or personal gain but out of a heart that wants to love God and care for others.

When you receive the ashes on your forehead today, let them be an encouragement to share compassion with others, just as God does with us. Let the ashes on your forehead remind you especially of the needs of those who do not have access to the basic needs of human life. Ask, what can I do to care for them?

As we prepare to celebrate the love of Christ at Easter, may we stand together as a global family, challenging ourselves to live and act with love and hope, *now* and for all future generations.

¹ Matthew 21:9



SLIDE 8: 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

Out of Ashes and/or We Turn to You by Michael Mangan

These Ashes by John Burland

Ashes by Drew Lane



SLIDE 9: 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.

SLIDE 9: 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 Laxmi, her child's club friends and all in her community in Nepal, that they may continue to work together to call for the things they need to flourish. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader 7: We pray for Tereesa, her family, Elders and others who have found belonging through Babaayn Aboriginal Corporation in Western Sydney, that they may continue to strengthen their culture and community together. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader 8: We pray for Priscilla and her family and community in Zimbabwe, that they may have all they need to care for the earth and each other during times of great change. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader 9: We pray for Thu, his wife Linh and their community in Vietnam, that they may continue to share knowledge and resources together so that all may thrive. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

SLIDE 9: Prayers of Intercession (continued)

Reader 10: We pray for our brothers and sisters who experience poverty and injustice, that we may act in solidarity to end injustices around the world – today and every day, for now and for all future generations. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer.



SLIDE 10: Our Father

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



SLIDE 11: Project Compassion 2023: For All Future Generations

Reader 7: This year, Caritas Australia’s Project Compassion theme is ‘For All Future Generations’.

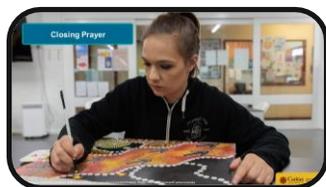
invites us to think about Mary’s yes – her response to the angel who shared God’s message about how she would become the mother of Jesus. She accepted this invitation to play a special part in the history of the human family. In the great prayer she prayed with her cousin Elizabeth, Mary said, “all generations will call me blessed”. Her yes to God is for all generations. Hopefully, ours can be too.

Throughout Project Compassion 2023, inspiring stories from Nepal, Australia, Vietnam and Zimbabwe will be shared, highlighting the importance of working hand in hand with communities around the world.

This Lent, we are encouraged to make simple lifestyle changes and act for social and environmental justice. Our challenge is to respond as Mary did, with a yes, expressed with love and hope, *now* and for all future generations.

Optional: Show the [Project Compassion School Film](#), available on the Caritas Australia website and on the Project Compassion USB. Or you might choose to show the [Introducing Project Compassion for Primary Schools PowerPoint](#).

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



SLIDE 12: 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 in the name of Christ.
All: Amen



SLIDE 13: Sending Forth

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

All: Thanks be to God.

Teacher Note: Before the Recessional Song, you might like to ask a representative from each class to come forward and collect a large Project Compassion box to take back to their class prayer space.



SLIDE 14: Recessional Song

Suggested Music:

These Hands *by Andrew Chinn*
Go Make a Difference *by Steve Angrisano*

