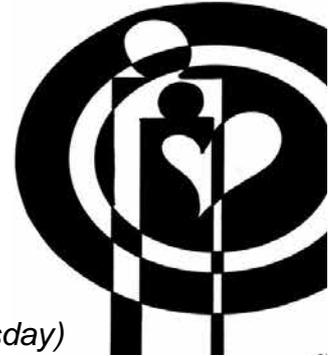


The school year is now well under way and Ash Wednesday will be upon us before we know it (March 5, 2014). Ash Wednesday is one of the most important liturgical days in our Church year. Therefore, schools will want to celebrate it with a Mass or a liturgy which includes the distribution of ashes. Here is a simple liturgy you might like to use, or adapt to suit your own situation.



Ash Wednesday Liturgy

Come Back to Me With All Your Heart

Call To Prayer *(based on Joel 2:12-18-First Reading for Ash Wednesday)*

Trumpet sounds a call to prayer

Reader 1 Now, now, it is your God who is calling you, come back to me with all your heart. Let your hearts show how sad you are. Come back to God who is loving and kind, slow to anger and always ready to forgive.

Trumpet sounds

Reader 2 Sound the trumpet! Gather all the people together: the old people, the children and the babies! This is the time to stop. This is the time to start again. This is the time.

Sing ***This is the Time*** by Michael Mangan (in *This is the Time: Songs for the Seasons*)

This Is The Time

Words & music: Michael Mangan

*This is the time to stop.
This is the time for new beginnings.
This is the time to open up your hearts.
This is the time to dream.
This is the time for building bridges.
This is the time to make a bold new start.*

***We're working for a world of justice,
Where every heart is free,
A land of love and peace and unity.
As we travel on together,
Believing in the dream,
This is the time to start again
Together you and me.***

*This is the time to rest.
This is the time to just remember.
This is the time to let your troubles go.
This is the time to heal.
This is the time to forgive each other.
This is the time to let the new seeds grow. (CH)*

*This is the time to share.
This is the time for joyful giving.
This is the time to wash away all pain.
This is the time for thanks.
This is the time for celebration.
This is the time to journey home again. (CH)*

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Leader Today is Ash Wednesday and we have gathered together as part of God's family to begin our journey towards the joy of Easter. Lent begins today and Lent is our chance to come back into the arms of our God who loves us. We call to mind the things that separate us from God and leave them in the ashes, so that we can live the new life that God dreams for us.

We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Leader God of new beginnings, look upon your family who wants to come back to you. Help us to grow closer to you this Lent. Give us the strength to stay away from things that keep us from you. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and resigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Sing ***Lenten Acclamation*** by Michael Mangan (in *This is the Time: Songs for the Seasons*)

Lenten Acclamation

Words & music: Michael Mangan

***Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory!
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory!***

*God loved us so much,
Sent the Son to us,
And all who believe in Him,
They shall live forever. (CH)*

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Gospel *Matt 6:1-6. 16-18*

(This gospel may be presented as an Echo Drama.

No Show-offs Allowed by Anne Frawley-Mangan in *Let Your Light Shine: Dramas from Matthew's Gospel.*)

Homily/Reflection

(The traditional foci of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The homily or reflection is a time when you could discuss Project Compassion or other Lenten giving programmes in light of these.)

Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

Reader 3 We will wear these ashes as a sign that we don't always live like true members of God's family. They are a sign that we are sorry, want to be forgiven and that we will try to be better friends, brothers, sisters, daughters and sons. We ask Jesus to help us be more like him.

Leader Loving God,
We ask you to bless us, your children as we receive these ashes. We are sorry for the times we have turned away from you. We want to show you how sad our hearts are and feel the joy of your forgiveness. Walk with us through the season of Lent and lead us to the new life of Easter.
We ask this through Jesus your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

All present come forward to be marked with the ashes in the sign of a cross on their foreheads as these words are spoken: Turn back to God and live the Gospel.

During the distribution of ashes the following songs are sung:

Sing ***Out of Ashes*** by Michael Mangan (in *This is the Time: Songs for the Seasons*)

Out Of Ashes

Words & Music by Michael Mangan

*Fire in the forest leaves us ashes,
Ashes lie smoking on the ground,
All the old and dead wood lies in ashes,
But don't be sad, don't let it bring you down.*

**For in the ashes new seeds are sown,
From the ashes new life will grow,
Leave the past in ashes,
Let the old things give way,
Start a fresh new life right here today,
In the ashes, from the ashes, out of ashes.**

*Now we leave our failings far behind us,
Leave them in the forest fire to burn.
All that's left behind is cold grey ashes,
And in the ashes now to God we turn. (CH)*

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Create A New Heart by Michael Mangan (in *Forever I Will Sing: Psalms for all Seasons*)

Create A New Heart

Words & music: Michael Mangan based on Psalm 51

**Create a new heart in me,
Come and set me free,
Open my eyes to see,
You can create a new heart in me.**

*Show me your love and kindness,
Touch me deep within.
Wash me clean from pain, O God,
Cleanse me from my sins. (CH)*

*Teach me the secrets of wisdom,
Make me faithful again.
Do not shut me out, O God,
Or take your Spirit away. (CH)*

*Fill me with joy and gladness,
Keep my spirit strong.
Open up my lips, O God,
And I will sing your song. (CH)*

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Silence *(After everyone has received their ashes and returned to their seats, a brief period of silence is observed. Silence is a powerful way to make space for God to speak to us. Allowing time for it will give the children the opportunity to listen to God in the stillness of their hearts.)*

Examination of Conscience

Leader Now that we are wearing the ashes that show the sorrow in our hearts, let us call to mind the times we have turned away from God and ask Jesus to help us to change.

Sing **We Turn To You** by Michael Mangan (in *This is the Time: Songs for the Seasons*)

We Turn To You

Words by Michael Mangan & Peter Hehir, Music by Michael Mangan

**Help us, hold us, heal us, cleanse us.
Open us, forgive us, fill us with your peace.**

*Have I shared my life with others,
Shared myself and what I own?
Jesus we turn to you and pray. (CH)*

*Am I truthful when I speak
And always honest to myself?
Jesus we turn to you and pray. (CH)*

*When I'm hurt do I forgive
Just as I'm forgiven now?
Jesus we turn to you and pray. (CH)*

*Have I helped all those I could
And cared for them with love?
Jesus we turn to you and pray. (CH)*

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Leader Forgive God,
We know you love us and walk with us. This Lent help us to give to the poor, stop doing the things that keep us away from you and to spend time with you in prayer, so that we can turn our lives back to you. We ask this through Jesus your son, one God with you and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen

Sing **Turn Back to God** by Michael Mangan (in *This is the Time: Songs for the Seasons*)

Turn Back To God

Words & Music by Michael Mangan

*We're Jesus People gathered here,
We have been baptised.
We try to follow Jesus but we have realised,
Sometimes we're not quite as good
As God would have us be.
Sometimes we just need to say,
"I think I've lost my way."*

***And we're ready for a change of heart,
And we're looking for a brand new star,
And we're making out a whole new plan
To change our lives we know we can
Turn back to God, turn back to God.***

*It isn't always easy to be the best we can,
But we are not alone here, we must understand,
God is always there for us ,
Waiting for our cry,
All we have to say to God is
"Come in, change my life." (CH)*

*We know we need to start again.
We need a change of heart.
We've turned from you, forgotten you,
And wandered from your path.
Lead us out of darkness now
Lead us on your way.
Fill us with your living light
Help us change today. (CH)*

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NOTES

- **The trumpet** could play the first two bars of ***This Is The Time***. (If a trumpet is not available, perhaps a trumpet setting on a keyboard could be used.)
- **The Call to Prayer** could be accompanied by **Freeze Frames** (also called Frozen Pictures, Tableau, Still Pictures etc). In small groups (approx 4-6), children use their bodies to make a tableau or still picture of a segment of the story. Below are some suggested parts to use. Children love to create these and have wonderful ideas. You will need to ensure that the Freeze Frames are formed in such a way that they can be seen by the assembly. For example, check that the picture is open and that each part of it is visible; that no-one is standing in front of other actors and blocking them. Freeze Frames allow for abstract interpretation, so don't worry if they are not literal.

Trumpet (first two bars of *This is the Time*)

- Reader 1** Now, now, it is your God who is calling you,
(Freeze Frame 1) come back to me with all your heart.
(Freeze Frame 2) Let your hearts show how sad you are.
(Freeze Frame 3) Come back to God who is loving and kind, slow to anger and always ready to forgive.

Trumpet (first two bars of *This is the Time*)

- Reader 2** Sound the trumpet!
(Freeze Frame 4) Gather all the people together: the old people, the children and the babies!
(Freeze Frame 5) This is the time to stop. This is the time to start again.
(Freeze Frame 6) This is the time.

- You will note that the liturgy includes a **Gospel Acclamation** that is not an Alleluia. This is because we do not sing (or say) 'Alleluia' in Lent. We lock it away until we celebrate the joy of the Resurrection at the Easter Vigil.
- In an **Echo Drama**, a narrator leads the telling of the story by proclaiming the words at the same time as miming a corresponding action. The assembly then echoes back the words and the action. Use lots of energy and expression to enhance the proclamation!
- The artwork used throughout the liturgy above is by Susan Daily IBVM. Available from www.johngarratt.com.au
- Music and drama resources available from Litmus Productions

