

ASSEMBLY OF THE WORD

RESTRICTIONS ON PLACES OF WORSHIP DURING COVID-19

- Checking-in is no longer required.
- Face masks are no longer required in most indoor settings but they are still recommended. They are strongly recommend if people have any COVID-19 symptoms, are with people who may be vulnerable to COVID-19 and/or are outdoors and cannot physically distance.
- Communal equipment should not be shared by attendees.
- Holy water fonts are to be emptied or removed.
- At the Sign of Peace, the practice of shaking hands is not recommended. During this time the congregation will be asked to pray for peace or show some other sign of peace.
- The distribution of Holy Communion will be in the hand only and not on the tongue. There will be no distribution of the chalice.
- All ministers of Holy Communion (both ordinary and extraordinary) are to use hand sanitiser before the distribution of Holy Communion commences and are not to physically touch anyone in the act of blessing.

Updates are available from <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-religion-https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/how-we-live>

ASH WEDNESDAY – YEAR A 2023

SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION

Prior to the Liturgy, two small bowls containing ashes are prepared. Normally, the ashes are made by burning the palms left from the previous Ash Wednesday. If this is not possible, ashes should be prepared from the burning of wood or other vegetation. The ashes are blessed during the Liturgy. Holy water and a sprinkler are also prepared. There is no Communion given during this Liturgy.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

GATHERING

Stand

Quiet music is played while people assemble.

The Leaders move to the front when the Assembly is to begin.

Leader 1: Let us commence our prayer on this solemn day with the words of Scripture:

All: You are merciful to all, O Lord,
and despise nothing that you have made.
You overlook people's sins, to bring them to repentance,
and you spare them, for you are the Lord our God.

Wisdom 11:24-25,27.

GREETING

All make the sign of the cross.

Leader 2: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader 2: Blessed be God,
who bore our sins in his body on the cross,
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.
Bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Blessed be God forever.

WELCOME

Leader 1: Today, we, the Catholic community of
gather to hear the Word,
and commence the time of repentance and conversion
which the Church calls us to
through this celebration of Ash Wednesday
and the time of Lent.

We gather in unity with the Church throughout the world,
and with our sisters and brothers
in neighbouring wider parish communities,
who are also gathering in the Lenten spirit.

PENITENTIAL RITE

Leader 2: As we prepare to listen to the Word of God,
we confess that we are sinners
and ask the Lord for pardon and strength.

Leader 2: Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile us to one another and to God:
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader 2: Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of sin and division:
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader 2: Lord Jesus, you intercede for us at the throne of grace:
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader 2: May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Leader 1: Let us pray.

Brief pause for silent prayer.

O God of salvation,
you are quick with your mercy
and steadfast with your love:
As we begin Lent help us to pray with ardour,
fast with a hunger for you
and be generous with those in need.
May our Lenten practices turn us from evil
and instil in us a love for righteousness.
We pray through Jesus Christ
our Saviour and brother.

All: Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Joel 2:12-18

Sit

A period of silence, about one or two minutes, is recommended at the conclusion of each reading.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 50: 3-6, 12-14, 17

Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!
If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!

Stand

GOSPEL: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

One of the Leaders goes to the lectern.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

The Leader makes the sign of the cross on the book, then on forehead, lips and breast.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end of the Gospel:

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SHARED REFLECTION

Sit

- *A shared reflection explaining the meaning which these readings had for their original hearers, and indicating how these readings apply to this particular community, should now be given.*
- *The shared reflection may be led by one of the Leaders or another person from the Assembly.*
- *The reflection must be prepared beforehand and should be a sharing of what the scripture is saying to us today, rather than a 'sermon type' presentation.*
- *The reflection should only be of 3-5 minutes duration.*

** If this is not done, the following should be said:*

Leader: Let us now reflect in silence on the words of the Gospel and take them to our hearts.

After a brief time, the Blessing and Giving of Ashes commences.

BLESSING AND GIVING OF ASHES

Sit

Leader 2: Dear friends in Christ,
let us implore God our Father
to bless and sanctify these ashes,
which we place on our heads
as a sign of repentance.

Brief pause for silent prayer.

Lord,
You do not wish sinners to die
but to turn to you and live.
In your goodness hear our prayer:
Pour out your blessing on these ashes,
which we place on our heads to remind us
that we are dust and unto dust we shall return.

Grant that by our faithful observance of Lent
we may gain pardon for our sins
and newness of life
in the image of your risen Son.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The ashes are now sprinkled with holy water in silence and the Leaders sign each other with the ashes.

Leader/s: I now invite you to receive these ashes
as a sign of your desire for forgiveness and conversion.

The Leader/s now sign the Congregation with the ashes while saying the following words:

Leader/s: Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Stand

The people are invited to pray; after the Prayers of the Faithful, the concluding prayer is said.

*It is desirable that the individual prayers be given by someone **other** than the Leader.*

Invitation to Prayer:

Leader 1: My sisters and brothers,
we should pray at all times,
but especially during this season of Lent:
We should keep watch with Christ
and pray to our Father.

Prayers of the Faithful for Lent can be found in the Appendices of the Altar Missal pgs 1520-1521. It is recommended that a petition for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life be included in the prayers.

- **Project Compassion Prayers of the Faithful - Ash Wednesday:** *We pray for all who are trying to rise from the ashes in their lives. May our support for Project Compassion remind us that now is the time to turn to the Lord with all our hearts and embrace the needs of God's whole family. Lord, hear us.*
- **Praying with Pope Francis:** *Each month Pope Francis puts forward a prayer intention and asks Catholics around the world to join him in prayer. These intentions cover all sorts of areas of life encouraging faith, renewing hope and calling us to loving service.*
February - for parishes: *We pray that parishes, placing communion at the centre, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity and welcome towards those most in need. Lord hear us.*
- **Prayer for the Synod of Bishops "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission"** - *We pray that the Synod of Bishops journey encourages people to speak with courage integrating freedom, truth and love. Lord, hear us.*

Concluding Prayer:

Leader 1: Father,
hear the prayers of your people.
Give us what you have inspired us
to ask you for in faith.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

RITE OF THANKSGIVING

Kneel

Leader 2: On this day we acknowledge our need for repentance
and our desire to live this Lent well.
We also realise that God is always with us in our daily lives
and for this we should always give thanks.
Let us kneel and offer our praise and thanks to God.

Leader 2: Praise to you, Father of mercies,
for in Christ's death and resurrection
you have set us free from sin
and offered us the promise of eternal life.
Your people give you glory:

All: We praise your name, O God.

Leader 1: Praise to you, Father of compassion,
you lift those who are bowed down
and give strength to those who suffer.
You sustain us on this Lenten pilgrimage.
Your people give you glory:

All: We praise your name, O God.

Leader 2: Praise to you, Father of love,
you sent your Son into the world
to be our Saviour and brother.
In him we are reconciled
into your loving embrace.
Your people give you glory:

All: We praise your name, O God.

Leader 1: Praise to you, Father of all,
in Christ we hear the Word of truth,
the Gospel of salvation.
Christ's example of faithful service
is the pattern for Christian life.
Your people give you glory:

All: We praise your name, O God.

Leader 2: We glorify you, O God,
for the marvels of your mercy.
To you be glory and honour, through Christ,
and in the Holy Spirit,
now and forever.

All: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader 1: Jesus invites us to call on his Father's name:
Filled with trust in Jesus' power,
we stand as we conclude our prayer of thanksgiving in his own words:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
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 those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Stand

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Leader 2: Remembering that Jesus is in our midst as we are assembled here,
let us pray for unity and reconciliation.

Brief pause for silent prayer.

Leader 2: Lord, may your healing love
which is present in this community
turn us from sin
and keep us on the way that leads to you.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

All: Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

GREETING

Stand

Leader 1: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

BLESSING

Leader 1: May God, who is blessed above all,
bless us in all things through Christ,
so that whatever happens in our lives
will work together for our good,
now and forever.

All: Amen.

Leader 1: May almighty God bless us,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

DISMISSAL

Leader 2: Let us go forth in peace, to spend this time of Lent worthily
that we might love and serve the Lord always.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Leaders bow to the altar and return to their places in the Assembly.

FINAL HYMN

A concluding hymn may be sung.

Acknowledgements:

Material for the Introductory Rites, Opening and Communion Prayers, Profession of Faith and the Praise Prayer have been taken from or adapted from Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours, Catholic Conference of Canadian Bishops © Concacan Inc., 1995 and LiturgyHelp www.liturgyhelp.com. All rights reserved. This material is used with permission for the purposes of Sunday Assemblies of Word and Communion in the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat, Victoria, Australia only.

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