



*Symbols Needed: A small glass bowl of Ashes (from local parish), a large glass bowl of water, a large lit candle, some stones from the garden all placed in the centre of the sacred space on a white cloth. Music needed: "Ashes" (Tom Conry) in Catholic Book of Worship or any suitable hymn. A CD of gentle music for the reflection time.*

### **Call To Conversion**

**Leader:** Lent is a Conversion Journey: Die to sin and selfishness and come to fuller life in the Risen Jesus.

### **Personal Reflection**

**Hymn (Ashes) is played while participants are reading the reflection.**

Our use of ashes at the beginning of Lent is an extension of the use of ashes with those entering the Order of Penitents. This discipline was the way the Sacrament of Penance was celebrated through most of the first millennium of Church history. Those who had committed serious sins confessed their sins to the bishop or his representative and were assigned a penance that was to be carried out over a period of time. After completing their penance, they were reconciled by the bishop with a prayer of absolution offered in the midst of the community.

During the time they worked out their penances, the penitents often had special places in church and wore special garments to indicate their status. Like the catechumens who were preparing for Baptism, they were often dismissed from the Sunday assembly after the Liturgy of the Word.

This whole process was modeled on the **conversion journey** of the catechumens, because the Church saw falling into serious sin after Baptism as an indication that a person had not really been converted. Penance was a second attempt to foster that conversion. Early Church fathers even called Penance a "second Baptism."





### **Call To Prayer:**

Leader: God, come to our assistance and open our minds, our hearts and our ears.

All: That we may be able to proclaim your great mercy and compassion to us, your people.

Leader: Glory to you, Source of All Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,

All: As it was in the beginning, is now and shall be forever. Amen

Leader: God, our Creator and Sustainer,

Your people have come together.

All: We have gathered. We have quit our rooms,

We have willingly left our work and daily tasks to come.

We desire to begin this Lenten journey of conversion.

With all your people, we weep and say:

Leader: “Spare us, O Lord, your people, and make not your heritage a reproach.”

All: We desire to return to you again, our compassionate God,

for you are gracious, merciful, slow to anger,

rich in kindness and relenting in punishment.

Leader: Hear us, O God, and lead us to a new way of living and loving in your sight.

All: Amen.





## Word of God

**Leader:** Renewing our sense of who we really are before God is the core of the Lenten experience. It is so easy to forget, and thus we fall into habits of sin, ways of thinking and living that are contrary to God's will. In this we are like the Ninevites in the story of Jonah. From the very beginning of Lent, God's Word calls us to conversion. If we open our ears and hearts to that Word, we will be like the Ninevites not only in their sinfulness but also in their conversion to the Lord. That, simply put, is the point of Ash Wednesday! Let us now listen to God's Word spoken to us today.

### Selected Readings from Our Sacred Scriptures

Reader 1: "When Mordecai learned all that was happening, he tore his garments, put on sackcloth and ashes, and walked through the city, crying out loudly and bitterly, till he came before the royal gate, which no one clothed in sackcloth may enter. (Likewise, in each of the provinces, wherever the King's legal enactment reached, the people went into deep mourning with fasting, weeping and lament; they all slept on sackcloth and ashes." Esther 4: 1-3

Reader 2: "The Lord God formed man out of the clay (dust) of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life and so man became a living being." Genesis 2: 7

Reader 3: "By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dirt (dust) and unto dirt (dust) you shall return." Genesis 3: 19

Reader 4: "O daughter of my people, gird on sackcloth, roll in the ashes. Mourn as for an only child with bitter wailing, for sudden upon us comes the Destroyer." Jeremiah 7: 26

Reader 5: "When the news reached the King of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the ashes."

Reader 6: "And all the Israelite men, women and children who lived in Jerusalem prostrated themselves in front of the temple building, with ashes strewn on their heads, displaying their sackcloth covering before the Lord" (Judith 4:11).

Reader 7: Jesus said, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes" (Mt 11:21, Lk 10:13).



### **Silence: Time for Reflection**

(Reflective Music)

### **Something to Ponder:**

You, personally, are called to conversion. Consider now your own patterns of speaking, living, acting, and relating with self, others, the environment and God that need to be totally transformed or modified in your life so that you, yourself, may live life fully and so that others, who live with you, may also live fully? (Right relationships).



### **Response to the Reflection**

#### **Psalm 51:1-17 (In Choir)**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.



### **Intercessions**

Leader: Let us pray now for real renewal and authentic conversion not only for ourselves but for our community, our Congregation, our Church and our world.

1. Lord, we pray that we may grow in deeper awareness and sensitivity of your presence in our lives, we pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer.
2. Lord, help us during this season of Lent to pause often for prayer and reflection during the days ahead, Lord, hear our prayer. R.
3. Lord, give a greater sensitivity to our Church leaders and world leaders that they may lead the world and its people with greater honesty and integrity, we pray to the Lord. R.
4. Lord, we ask you to strengthen our inner resources with your power that we may grow in deeper sensitivity and gentleness when confronted with personal difficulties, we pray to the Lord. R.

5. Lord, be with those who are feeble, aged, sick and terminally ill and grant them great peace of mind as they await your coming, we pray to the Lord. R
6. For whom and for what should we include in our prayers today.....

Leader: Lord, as we begin these forty days of Lent, may we come closer to you and deepen our relationship with you in our community and personal prayer, in our ministry and in our relationships with one another. We ask your help through Jesus Christ, our Lord and our brother. Amen.



### **Ritual Action**

At this time each community member is invited to come to the centre and bless himself with the holy water or the ashes as a sign of his desire to work on becoming a new creation in God's sight this Lenten season.

### **Our Father**

Leader: Let us now together, as one body, pray the prayer that Jesus gave us.

### **Concluding Prayer**

All: O God, as we begin this holy season of Lent strengthen us in our endeavors to become free from whatever blinds our vision. Strengthen our resolve to become better human beings so that we may be worthy mirrors of your love and goodness. Bless our efforts to live in deep union with you and with all the people of the world. We ask this prayer in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen. Live, Jesus, in our hearts. Forever!



