



CEIST

Catholic Education  
An Irish Schools Trust



# PRAYER REFLECTION RESOURCES FOR LENT 2020

Kate Liffey

CEIST Faith Leadership and Governance Coordinator

## Prayer and Reflection Resources for Lent 2020

**Part A** of this resource contains Weekly Reflections. **Part B** contains a prayer service for the Distribution of Blessed Ashes on Ash Wednesday and a Reconciliation Service for the end of Lent. All resources can be adapted for your own context.

You are invited to share a short reflection (Part A) every Wednesday of Lent beginning Ash Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and ending Wednesday 1st April.<sup>1</sup> These six reflections can be shared in any number of ways. For example, they could be used:

-  As part of a shared intercom type reflection at the start of the day
-  For assemblies with the whole school/particular year group
-  For staff meetings or for meetings with parents
-  As part of individual class group reflections

Each reflection is written for two speakers to deliver but depending on your own school, you can work with a bigger group sharing the material or one person on their own can say the reflection him/herself. All the reflections are short, all except one are 1 A4 page. Each will take about 5 to 8 minutes to deliver. They can be adapted as required.

As we all know, Lent is traditionally associated with repentance, and with fasting, prayers and almsgiving. It is understood as a time of preparation for Easter. But what does that language and those concepts mean for young people today? Some might say, not a huge amount. While we always seek to hold on to important religious language, sometimes a re-working of themes and concepts for our young people in our schools is needed.

With this in mind, the overall theme of these Lenten reflections is **'Returning'**. In our school, during Lent we are called to return to those things that speak to the heart of what it is to be fully human, fully alive and fully with one another and for one another. We are called to come 'home' to ourselves, to one another and to God.

The reflections are also designed to provoke a little bit of dialogue so it would be good to provide a space – even if it's for a short time – for students to have a chat as well as to hear the reflection. A question or two (**in blue**) is included as part of each reflection. If it's not possible to have discussion/dialogue time straight after the reflections, maybe you or the RE team could think of some creative ways of encouraging students to return to the questions during the day – for example, have your Lenten sacred space in your foyer with the questions presented there as part of the space. Or perhaps you might randomly place some of the

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<sup>1</sup> You can obviously use these reflections on another day of the week for each of the weeks of Lent, except the reflection provided for Ash Wednesday which obviously needs to be used on Ash Wednesday itself.

questions on corridors for students to reflect on as they move around the school as part of their normal school day.



The reflections and conversations are designed to promote spiritual, philosophical and religious literacy in your school by generating meaningful dialogue that in turn lead to meaning-making moments in the lives of students and all members of your school community. Different belief perspectives can be engaged with through these reflections in a respectful and inclusive manner. The material provided here can be connected to many aspects of school life, for example, Religious Education, Wellbeing, Science, Physics, Art, Music, Philosophy and so on.

To give some background to the resources, principals and RE teachers and/or school Chaplain (or indeed anyone else organising for these prayer moments) will find the following short YouTube clip useful and hopefully inspiring

- A piece on Rembrandt's masterpiece, *The Return of the Prodigal*. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TgUikT-Oc> (2 mins 59)

This clip frames the theme of **Returning** for the reflections. Each day's reflection also has some additional material to help in your planning and thinking. Equally, these reflections can be used without any engagement with the above two clips or the additional daily clips and material. The material is 'ready to go' as is!

Ideally, time permitting, if you have a senior student leadership team (e.g. student faith leadership team) leading these reflections, they should also be afforded a chance to engage with this material (and the material suggested for each day) in advance of sharing the prayers with the rest of the school community.

We hope you enjoy using these prayer resources. God bless you and all your school community this Lent.

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Summit House, Embassy Office Park, Kill, Co. Kildare, W91 VK0T. Phone +353 (0)1 6510350 [www.ceist.ie](http://www.ceist.ie), [info@ceist.ie](mailto:info@ceist.ie)

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## Part A: Weekly Reflections

### Week 1: Ash Wednesday (26<sup>th</sup> February 2020):

#### A small blue dot!

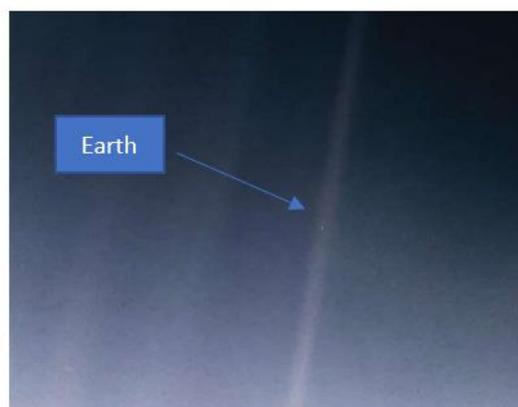
For the Principal/RE teacher/organizer/student leadership team: see

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/02/first-person-see-pale-blue-dot/> (There's a beautiful and very short video that's well worth looking at!)

**Speaker 1: Good morning and welcome to our reflection.**

**Speaker 2:** You'll never guess what photo was recently voted the world's best-ever selfie! You might be surprised to hear that the picture chosen was not of someone famous. The winner was actually a picture of our very own little blue planet.

**Speaker 1:** Google 'Pale blue dot' and NASA and you'll see the most amazing picture of Planet Earth. The photo 'Pale blue dot' was taken 30 years ago by the Voyager 1 probe. It was taken from 6 billion km away from planet Earth. It shows our world as the tiniest of little specks in the vastness of the universe. It's a picture of our home.



(Earth: A mote of dust, suspended in a sunbeam, NASA)

**Speaker 2:** The scientist, Candy Hansen who helped organise the mission to collect this photo, when she saw it for the first time, said, and I quote, "I just sat there. It was overwhelming to think about. That our little spacecraft was so far away, that this was a picture of home, and somewhere in that little bright speck, I was sitting at my desk. And it was so dramatic with it being in that ray of scattered light. Logically, I knew this was just scattered light in the optics. I knew that. But my heart was like, "Oh it looks so special. The sun is shining on us!""

**Speaker 1:** It's worth looking at this amazing photo if you can. It really makes us ask some big questions. Questions like, how big is the universe? How did the universe come into being? Are there any other life forms in our universe? How are we to protect this 'pale blue dot' that we call home? Endless questions for anyone interested in astronomy and the universe!

**Speaker 2:** But this image and others like it also invite us to ask questions that are even bigger than that; questions around the very meaning of life. They invite us to consider our beliefs about God. How did God create all of this from nothing? Does God have a plan for our little blue dot, planet Earth?

**Speaker 1:** In the Christian tradition, Lent is a time for asking ourselves some big questions and preparing ourselves for a very big moment – Easter. If you receive Ashes today, they are given to you to help you remember your own need for God and to remember your need for others. The Christian is okay with feeling a little bit small because even though we are small, and our world is small in the

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vastness of the universe, we believe God is with us and God loves us. Lent is a time to ask the questions but also to listen to the answers given to us in faith.

**Speaker 2:** This Lent, as a CEIST school along with dozens of other CEIST schools up and down the country, we'll take some time every week to ask a **few big questions** about this 'pale blue dot' that we call home and about ourselves. For this first week, we start with an important question for you to think about and maybe talk about, **"The Universe is huge. Is belief in God important in the face of this big universe? If so, why? If not, why not?"**

**Speaker 1:** Thanks for listening and have a good day today. God bless.

## **Week 2: (Beginning Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March):**

### **Star, star teach me how to shine!**

*For the Principal/RE teacher/organizer/student leadership team: see this song from the Irish band, the Frames, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMccPJqyg0o> called *Star, Star teach me how to shine*. Joni Mitchell's, "We are Stardust" might also be worth a listen.... An oldie but a classic!*

**Speaker 1: Good morning and welcome to our morning's Lenten reflection.** Last week, if you remember, we reflected on the 'pale blue dot' that is our planet. This week we'll reflect a little bit on our own star-like qualities, the ways in which we brighten up the world and the way we bring light to others.

**Speaker 2:** The Irish band, the Frames wrote a song a few years ago called, *Star, Star teach me how to Shine*. It's worth trying to find it online. At one level it's about a young person trying to figure out life. At another level, it's about him looking to God to help him figure out the meaning of his life.

**Speaker 1:** In a world where so many people are trying to grab a few moments of fame, it's good to remember that within each of us shines a very bright light, a light that is our personality, our gifts, our talents and our interests. In God's eyes, each one of us is like a very bright star. Many, many years ago the singer Joni Mitchell once sang, "We are stardust, billion-year-old carbon, we are golden". As Christians we believe that are all made of something amazing, we all come from God. As the Bible puts it, "you are God's work of art and he loves you".

**Speaker 2:** This Lent it's worth reflecting on your own gifts and how much God loves you. As the writer Marianne Williamson puts it,

**Speaker 1:** Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do.

**Speaker 2:** So, this morning, the question for today's discussions and reflection is a very simple but challenging one. As we journey towards Easter and a celebrating of God's total love for us his children, **how do I feel about the idea of being God's work of art, his beloved? How real does that feel to me?**

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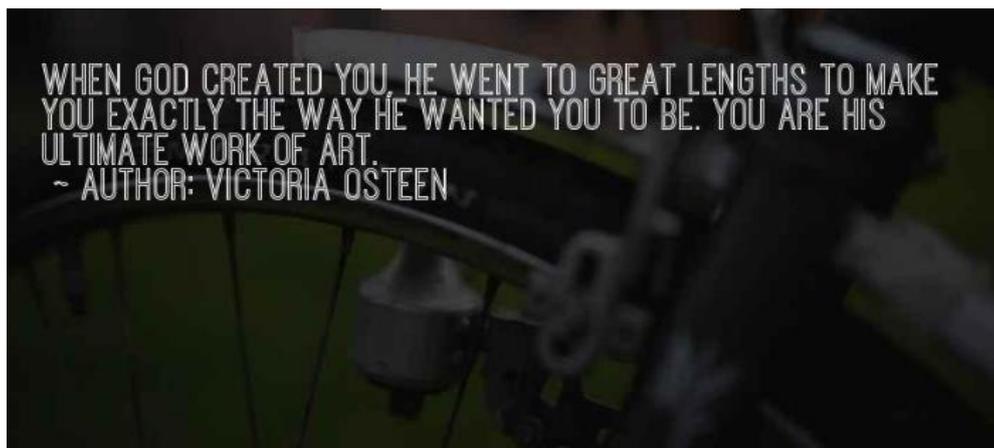
**Speaker 1: God bless you this Lent. Thanks for listening and have a good day today.**

### **Week 3: (Beginning Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March):**

#### **A great work of art**

*For the Principal/RE teacher/organizer/student leadership team, have another look at the video clip above on Rembrandt's masterpiece, the Return of the Prodigal. If you've time, have a look as well online for the writings of Henri Nouwen on the return of the prodigal son. You'll find a good summary here*

<https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/return-prodigal-son-story-homecoming>.



**Speaker 1: Good morning and welcome to our reflection.** Did you know that in parts of the Arab world, every work of art has a tiny flaw? This was because the artist knows that only God is perfect and only God is the perfect artist. The work of art the artist produces is still beautiful but it's not perfect.

**Speaker 2:** Lent is a time to acknowledge the ways in which we can be both beautiful in God's eyes but also not perfect. God's okay with that; he has compassion for us. The important thing to remember is that we have free will, we can make choices. We can choose what is good but sometimes we choose what is not so good. We are called to turn our lives around and to direct our lives to God.

**Speaker 1:** The greatest picture ever painted is reckoned to be a painting by the Dutch artist, Rembrandt. It is among the Dutch master's final works, likely completed within two years of his death in 1669. It is called the Return of the Prodigal and is based on the story from the bible of the prodigal son's return to his father.

**Speaker 2:** In the painting, the son has returned home in an awful state from his travels. He'd wasted all his father's money and ended up penniless. He kneels before his father wishing for forgiveness and a renewed place in the family. His father receives him with an amazingly tender hug. In fact, in the bible story, we hear that he rushed out to greet him, giving us the impression that he was waiting for his son's return, maybe going out to look for him every day.

**Speaker 1:** In the story, the father doesn't even seem that interested in his son's big long apology, he's just so happy to see him! He's absolutely mad about his son and is delighted that he is home.

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**Speaker 2:** You don't have to be perfect to be loved perfectly is the message of the story. So during Lent, this is a time for realising how much you are loved by God. Lent is also a time of recognising that we *do* make mistakes and it's good to be honest about that, to say sorry. Saying sorry can be hard but it can give us great peace and a sense of being in harmony with one another.

**Speaker 1:** Let's pray about that..... God of infinite love, I thank you for making me your work of art. Thank you for the call to be more patient, gentle and compassionate with myself and with others. Here in the middle of Lent, I turn to you to ask for your help. Please soften my heart. Help me to let go of judging others or being too hard on myself. Amen.

**Speaker 2:** And the question we ask ourselves today to reflect on and discuss is **“Do I understand myself as being perfectly loved by God even though I'm not perfect?”**

**Speaker 1:** Thanks for listening and have a great day.

### **Week 4: (Beginning Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March):** **In a world where you can be anything, be kind!**

For the Principal/RE teacher/organizer/student leadership team, have a look at the heart-warming clip that celebrated World Downs Syndrome Day a couple of years ago <https://t.co/aHbdgOA6JU?amp=1>

It might also be worth looking at some of the 'Be Kind' movement that emerged following the tragic death of Caroline Flack last month. Obviously, there are sensitivities here so you should use your own discretion in order to be sensitive to your own school context and to the ages of the young people with whom you are engaging with through these reflections. If you decide you don't want to go down the route of online bullying and suicide, **omit the pieces at the start and at the end in green below.**

A good article on the background to this 'Be Kind' moment is <https://www.google.ie/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=19&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewjB3ovahvtnAhX3QhUjHThXBs8QFjASegQIBxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.com%2Fnews%2Fblogs-trending-51532841&usg=AOvVaw0mVvEj9d4fZNL6JyKC7jW6>.



**Speaker 1: Good morning and welcome to our reflection today for the fourth week of Lent.**

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**(Speaker 2:** A few weeks ago, you'd have found on Twitter a lot of 'be kind' hashtags. These followed the tragic death of the former Love Island presenter Caroline Flack.

**Speaker 1:** The fact that people could post really harsh and mean comments anonymously on various social media platforms about someone they didn't know or had never met is a big problem. We never know what someone is going through and that's why, in the words Caroline Flack shared herself, "in a world where you can be anything, be kind".)

**Speaker 2:** Last week, if you remember we reflected on the question, "do I understand myself as being perfectly loved by God even though I'm not perfect?" Today we're going to reflect on the next obvious question, "do I understand other people as being perfectly loved by God?"

**Speaker 1:** Two years ago, a very special Carpool Karaoke went viral. Rebecca Carless, from England, joined 49 other mothers from an online support group to make the Carpool Karaoke video ahead of World Down's Syndrome Day on 21 March. It has since been watched and shared by over a million people all over the globe, including celebrities such as James Corden.

**Speaker 2:** Rebecca's son Archie who is four and has Downs Syndrome loves the video and the song they sing to. The song is called *A Thousand Years* by Christina Perri. Rebecca says that the thing they want to share in the video is "we are just normal mums, we love our kids, they love us, and they are just like other four-year-olds, we wouldn't change them."

**Speaker 1:** Lent is a time when we look at the ways we don't accept people for who they are and when we don't love them for who they are. Lent is a time when we challenge ourselves to be kinder because everyone needs to know that they are loved and accepted, even though they are not perfect. Everyone needs to know that they belong. We pray that we will be kind to others this Lent and always because this is how God treats us; with total love, acceptance and kindness.

**Speaker 2:** We finish with these two questions today, **how can I be kinder to others so that they feel loved and accepted? How can we make sure that our school is a community where everyone feels accepted?**

**(Speaker 1:** And finally, we remember the words of Caroline Flack, may she rest in peace. In a world where you can be anything, be kind and we ask another question, **how can I be kinder to others online so that they feel accepted for who they are?)**

**Speaker 1:** Thanks for listening and have a good day.



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**Week 5: (Beginning Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March):****Coming home to ourselves**

For the Principal/RE teacher/organizer/student leadership team, the song by Chantal Kreviazuk called *Feels like Home* available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-ouxPhYy7Y> is helpful to get a sense of this week's theme. Again the clip on the pale blue dot from Week 1 is important here.

This week's reflection focuses on the importance of having time to reflect, to 'come home to ourselves'. Obviously, the term 'home' is a sensitive one for lots of reasons and for lots of students. Care needs to be taken with it. The term 'home' is used here to describe a spiritual reality; a sense of being at home, and comfortable with oneself. It's also used in terms of care of our common home.

**Speaker 1: Good morning and welcome to our reflection.** In a beautiful song called *Feels like Home*, the singer sings, "If you knew how lonely my life has been and how long I've been so alone, if you knew how I wanted someone to come along and change my life the way you've done." She goes on in the chorus of the song to say that what she has found now 'feels like home to me'.

**Speaker 2:** Lent is a time for us to come home to God, to ourselves, and to one another. In God, we find perfect peace, perfect joy and perfect love.

**Speaker 1:** You might remember our reflection on Ash Wednesday. We encouraged you to google 'little blue dot' and NASA.

**Speaker 2:** Thirty years ago, one of the scientists working with Voyager 1, Carl Sagan asked NASA to get Voyager 1 to spin around and take a quick snap of planet earth. The photo taken in a split second changed his life. It made him realise that we should be kinder to one another and work together to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

**Speaker 1:** But how do we do that?

**Speaker 2:** This Lent is a chance to reflect and to ask big questions and to listen to one another's answers to these questions. The Pope, Pope Francis wrote a letter to all the people of the world on this question of how we can protect the earth, our home, and his answer to it was actually very simple.



**Speaker 1:** He said the only way we will preserve our world is if we learned to love it. He said that we must learn to go out into nature and look at it with fresh eyes. He said that we had to learn to love it because we will protect and cherish what we know and love. He said that when we pause in nature and stop and pray or meditate in nature, we will find God in creation and we'll be amazed at the beauty all around us.

**Speaker 2:** But he went a little bit further than that. He asks *us* a question, 'do you feel at home in yourself'? Do you feel peaceful in yourself? He suggested that if we want to find peace in ourselves, we might go out in nature and find peace there. A walk with friends or family on the beach or in a park, a moment spent out in the garden, some time spent looking up at the night sky....

**Speaker 1:** So, for our reflection questions today, **what kind of prayer or relaxation or meditation could you do to help you feel more at home in our natural world? And would that help you to feel more at home with yourself?**

**Speaker 2: Thanks for listening to our reflection today – have a great day.**

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## Week 6 (Week beginning 30<sup>th</sup> March) - God is there for us

*For the Principal/RE teacher/organizer/student leadership team, the song from the movie, Five Feet Apart is well worth a listen to. It's called, "Won't give up" and it's sung by Andy Grammar. It's available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouEezpuPc3A>. In fact, if it's possible, it would be good to play this song at the end of the reflection, time and technology allowing!*

**Speaker 1: Welcome to our final reflection for this Lent.** We are now coming to the end of our time of preparation for Easter.

**Speaker 2:** Easter is hard to understand isn't it? Jesus dying on the cross. Jesus rising from the dead. Jesus in the Eucharist. All **really** challenging ideas. But what if there was one song that captured what that all might mean?

**Speaker 1:** Well, it might be hard to get just one song to capture everything, but a song called *Won't Give Up* by Andy Grammar might help us understand Easter a bit better.

**Speaker 2:** The song starts with the lines, "I will fight, I will fight for you. I always do until my heart is black and blue". (end quote). That's good Friday. Jesus' suffering for us because he loves us.

**Speaker 1:** Then the song goes on, "And I will stay, I will stay with you" (end quote). That's really the Last Supper. Jesus giving himself to us in the Eucharist so that for all time, we know that he is with us. With Jesus, we need never feel alone.

**Speaker 2:** And the lines from the song, "I'll reach my hands out in the dark and wait for yours to interlock, I'll wait for you, I'll wait for you". (End quote). Maybe that's like Easter Sunday. Because we believe perfect love destroys fear, hatred, death. God reaches out to us through Jesus. He reaches out to us even in the darkest moments and waits for us to reach back to him.

**Speaker 1:** It's easy sometimes to feel a bit overwhelmed. We remember that little blue dot from week 1's reflection! But it's interesting to hear that the words, 'don't be afraid' appear 365 times in the Bible. That's one 'don't be afraid' for every day of the year! Easter is the great festival of love that reminds us not to be afraid. God loves us and because of that love we have nothing to fear.

**Speaker 2:** We have God on our side and God loves us. And we have one another. We are a community that knows that every one of its members is loved and accepted for who they are. This is the spiritual armour we need to protect us and to mind us. Easter is a celebration of that confidence we can have in God.

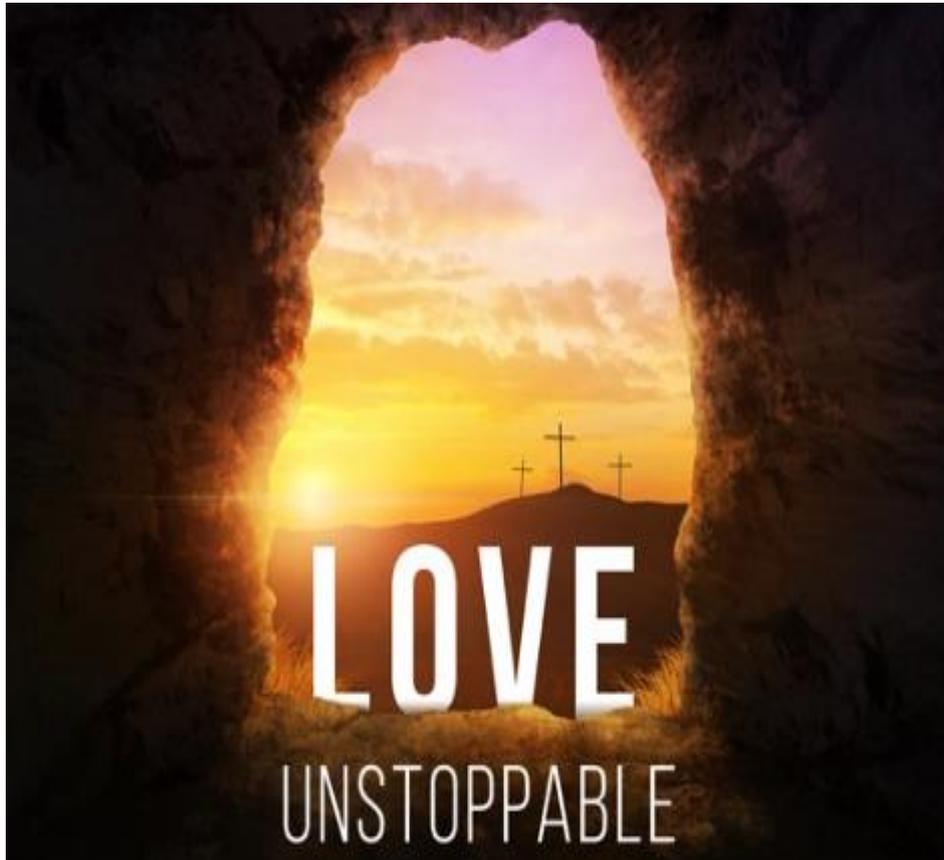
**Speaker 1:** So, let's have a moment of quiet prayer before the final question for reflection this Lent..... God you know me, and you love me. Thank you for being with me. Thank you for the friends whose care for me and acceptance of me show me your care and acceptance. Help me to trust you and your love for me. Help me to grow in this love especially as we celebrate Easter in a few weeks' time. Help me to love other people as you love me. Amen

**Speaker 2:** And our question for today is, why **do you think the words Don't be Afraid appear so often in the Bible?** Thank you for listening to our reflection. Have a great day.

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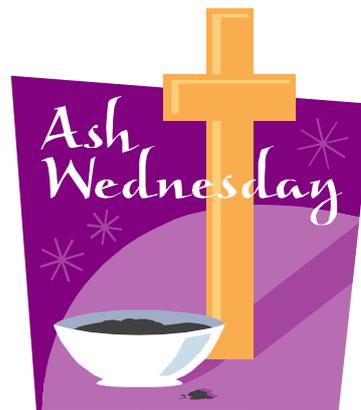


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## Part B: Prayer Services



### Ash Wednesday and the Distribution of Ashes

(Adapted, Courtesy of the Diocese of Kerry,

<http://dioceseofkerry.ie/media/uploads/Ash%20Wednesday%20and%20the%20Distribution%20of%20Ashes.pdf>)

#### **Needed:**

A purple cloth, bible, a candle, taper, matches, Blessed Ashes

For the rucksack: (1) Bible (2) Children's resolutions (3) Socks and a fleece (4) A cross (5) Bottle of water (6) Trócaire box.

#### **Sacred Space:**

Place a purple cloth in the centre. On it place your candle, a bible, a bowl of blessed ashes, and the Giving Tree with suggestions for giving during Lent. During the service six students will place items in the rucksack that will help them on the Lenten journey.

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**Opening Hymn: Suggested hymn, 'My Shepherd is the Lord'** Jack Miffleton (or the song from Week 4's reflection, *A thousand Years*, by Christina Perri.)

#### **Opening Prayer**

God our Father, you guide and direct us on our journey through life. Be with us as we begin our Lenten journey of faith and love. Help us to grow closer to you during this special holy season. Help us to do your will each day during Lent. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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All: Amen.

## Reading

Isaiah 58: 6-8

A reading from the book of Isaiah “The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the burden of injustice and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun.”

The word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

## Gospel

Mark 1: 14-15

A reading from the gospel according to Mark

Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Good News from God. “The right time has come, he said, and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from sin and believe the Good News.”

The gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## DISTRIBUTION OF BLESSED ASHES

### Prayer

May these blessed ashes remind us of God’s invitation to us to repent from sin and to follow him.

The ashes are placed on the forehead of each person in the sign of a cross - saying

**Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return. [Genesis 3:19]**

(Quiet reflective music can be played in the background).

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Person 1: Lord, we pray for one another. Help us to love one another as you have loved us. Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Person 2: Lord, we pray that our little acts of self-denial will help us to unite with the suffering of others. Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

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Person 3: Lord, we pray that we will grow in concern and care for those in need in our communities and for our planet.

Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Person 4: Lord, we pray for our school community. May we always be places where people come to know the great love God has for them.

Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

## THE LENTEN JOURNEY

The Rucksack is used here. It can be held by one student as other students fill it.

Student 1: As we begin our Lenten journey, we place a bible in the rucksack. The bible is our map showing us the way to live and love like Jesus. We pray that the gospel values will inspire and guide us.

Student 2: We place in the rucksack our Lenten resolutions, promises we have made, promises we wish to keep as a sign of our love and warm friendship for Jesus. We pray that we will keep our Lenten commitments.

Student 3: We place in the rucksack the questions we will be asking over these weeks of Lent. Questions are good and they are important. We pray that we will be kind to ourselves and to others with these questions.

Student 4: As we embark on our Lenten journey, we pack a change of clothes (socks and a fleece). Lent is a time of transformation when we cast off any sinful ways and put on the attitude of goodness and love. We pray that we will change our ways so as to become more like Jesus.

Student 5: As we begin our Lenten journey, we pack a cross. It is our compass which points in all four directions. The vertical reminds us of our relationship with God. The horizontal reminds us of our relationship with people. We pray that we will grow closer to God and others.

Student 6: Lent is a desert time - a time of fasting, a time of struggle. We need God's strength supporting us to keep our promises. We place a bottle of water in the rucksack to remind us of God's blessing during these special days. We pray for the strength to fast this Lent.

Student 7: We place a Trócaire box in the rucksack, a sign of our commitment to share a little of our money with those who are in need – of homes, food, clothing and education. We pray that we will be generous in spirit.

## Closing Prayer

God, source of life, you know us, and you love us. You know our desires and our weakness. Renew our hearts and our lives that we may live as your people. Help us to reach out to others and to share your love with all people. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

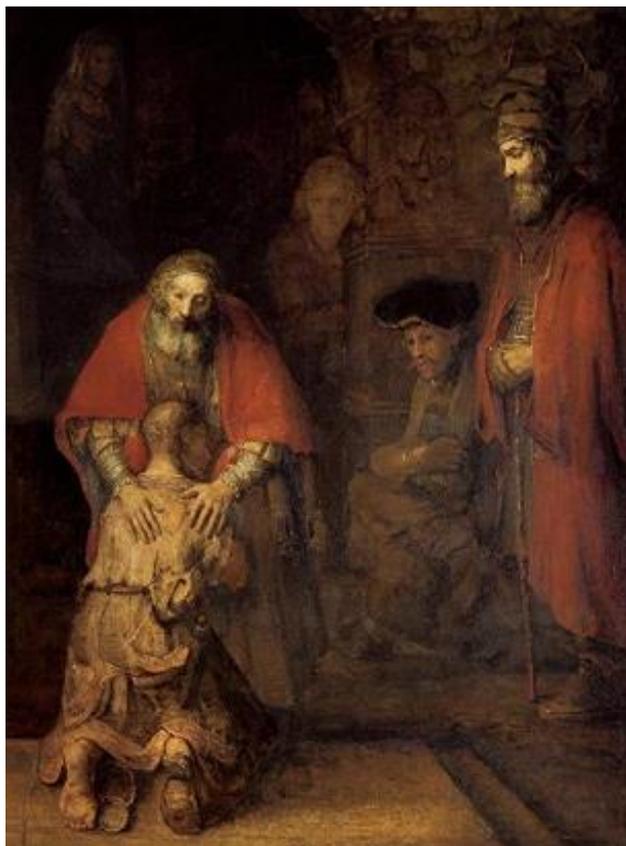
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**Closing Hymn:** Suggestion: *Come back to Me (Talbot)* or *Feels like Home* by Chantal Kreviazuk (*from Week 5 Reflection*)

## Reconciliation Service for the End of Lent



(Adapted, courtesy Dublin Diocesan Liturgy Centre, see <http://litmus.dublindiocese.ie/2013/03/reconciliation-service-3/>)

**Note:** *A Priest or Priests will be required for this Reconciliation service*

### Theme

The telling of the story of the prodigal Son Luke 15:1-3 11-32 (which we've reflected on as part of our daily reflections) reminds us of the call to return home to the Lord through the grace of the sacrament of reconciliation. Home is where we belong. When we are not at home with ourselves, we are often not at home with our God or with our world. Lent can often be the beginning of that journey to a place of welcome and forgiveness.

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**Setting**

If you are not holding this service in a Church, create a small sacred space with your CEIST candle, cross or other symbolic image. A copy of Rembrandt's "Prodigal Son" can be helpful. (This is easily accessible online).

Candles and low-level lighting can help create a calm atmosphere, while instrumental music can also help to relax people.

**Gathering Song** – Suggestion: Take Me Home by David Haas (or Feels like Home by Chantal Kreviazuk from the weekly reflections (see above).

**Words of Welcome from celebrant.****Opening prayer**

We gather with confidence in your love for us

**All: Amen**

We reflect upon our actions in the world,

We reflect upon our relationships with others

**All: Amen**

We walk the road of reconciliation with each other

We walk the road of the prodigal son or daughter with heavy hearts

**All: Amen**

We trust in your forgiveness

We trust in your love and acceptance

**All: Amen**

**Liturgy of the Word****Celebrant:**

*During Lent, God continually reminds us that he is a loving God who longs for us to return to him.*

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**Luke 15: 1-3; 11-32 – The Story of the Prodigal**

A reading from the gospel according to Luke

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

<sup>28</sup> “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

<sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

<sup>31</sup> “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

The gospel of the Lord

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All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Reflection from celebrant (optional)** – If the celebrant is offering a reflection, he might be advised in terms of the reflections students heard during Lent (See Part A above)

### Examination of conscience

Celebrant: We take a few moments now to reflect on how and when we have turned away from God.

**Reader 1.** When we have chosen to think of ourselves, rather than others. Lord have mercy.

**All:** Lord have mercy

**Reader 2.** When appearance has mattered more than who we are. Christ have mercy.

**All:** Christ have mercy

**Reader 1.** When we have neglected the call to work for justice for others and for our world. Lord have mercy.

**All:** Lord have mercy

**Reader 2.** When we have taken what we wanted, rather than what we needed. Christ have mercy.

**All:** Christ have mercy

**Reader 1.** When we have spoken ill of others and ignored their goodness. Lord have mercy.

**All:** Lord have mercy

**Reader 2.** When we have seen other people being treated badly but failed to speak out. Christ have mercy.

**All:** Christ have mercy

**Reader 1.** When we have allowed a world to exist where people are hungry, homeless and afraid. Lord have mercy.

**All:** Lord have mercy

**Reader 2.** When we have ignored or forgotten your love for us. Christ have mercy.

**All:** Christ have mercy

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**Celebrant:**

Merciful God,

We ask your forgiveness for the times we have failed to follow you

Or listen to your word.

Be with us as we strive to do better, and become more aware of the needs of others

And your voice in our lives.

Amen.

**Rite of Reconciliation**

*An opportunity for individual confession could be made possible by the presence of a reasonable number of priests. Students might be given a prayer card with the Rembrandt Prodigal image on it. While students are waiting, quiet music may be played to help reflection and to help with the confidentiality of the confessions.*

*Celebrant: As we thank God for his forgiveness and return to our lives, we reflect on the needs of others in the wider world.*

A student or students then read the story of Angela, Madris and their Families (from the Trócaire box).

See [www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org)

***Celebrant ends with a blessing.***

*We ask God's blessing on us all as we leave this place.*

*May God give us the ability to forgive, as we have been forgiven,*

*The ability to share, that we may have enough,*

*And the ability to love, that we may know joy*

*In the name of God, Father, Son and Spirit, who loves us, forgives us and provide for us.*

*ALL: Amen.*

**Closing Song:** Suggestion: Christ Be Our Light by Bernadette Farrell or *Won't Give Up* by Andy Grammar.