

PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's,
Warrington*



A Time of Prayer for use at Home

2 March 2022

Preparation

It can be helpful to prepare a little space as a focus for your prayer. Perhaps light a candle or tea light and place it next to a crucifix or icon.

The ashes in the packet have been blessed. Pour them out on to a saucer and dampen them with a little water – not too much, literally a drop or two will be enough.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

Introduction

Today is Ash Wednesday – the first day of Lent. A long time ago, people wore sackcloth and ashes to show that they were sorry for their sins. Today, we receive ashes as a sign of repentance. In other words, during the 40 days of Lent, we try to make changes in our lives that help us to come closer to the Lord. We do this through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. In so doing, we prepare ourselves to renew our Baptismal Promises on Easter Day.

Gospel

(Mt 6: 1-6, 16-18)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward.

But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Receiving the Ashes

Dip your thumb into the ashes and make a small sign of the cross with them on your forehead. Then, pray:

Lord,

I receive these ashes as a sign of my love for you.

I can see your love at work in my life
and I desire to draw closer to you.

May this Lent be a time of grace for me.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Reflection

Now take a few moments to think how you could mark the season of Lent this year...

Prayer

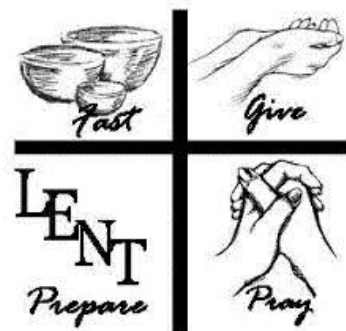
How might you find time to pray and where? What resources might you use? (Spiritual Reading, Prayer Apps, etc)

Fasting

What might you give up / fast from this Lent?

Almsgiving

Which charity could you support from the money you save from your fasting?



The Lord's Prayer

Blessing

May the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

Acknowledgements

Gospel Reading from *The Jerusalem Bible* © 1966 by Darton Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd.

PRAY FOR PEACE IN UKRAINE



In an interview a couple of weeks ago, Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, the Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of the Holy Family of London, said:

Background

Ukraine is the largest country in Europe, which I think is surprising for many people to find out. It is larger than Germany and larger than France and has a population of about 46 million people. It stands, in many ways, between the Russian Federation and the European Union, with its borders bordering Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldavia and Romania, and of course, the Black Sea and Russia on its Eastern borders.

Why is Mr. Putin so interested in Ukraine? Well, he has said that the greatest tragedy of this past century is the collapse of the Soviet Union – a statement that I think is very hard for us to understand when the greatest tragedies of this past century have to have been the Second World War, the First World War, the Holocaust, the Holodomor in Ukraine and other devastating things that have happened – including the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986. So if we have a person in charge of the Russian Federation who feels that the greatest tragedy in the past century was the collapse of the Soviet Union, it's no wonder that he is interested – at all costs – in reforming such an organisation.

Let's be frank, war kills. People are dying. People are being maimed. Households are being destroyed. Families are being torn apart. This is a tragedy that is unfolding before our very eyes.

What can we do?

We can pray. In fact, we know that Pope Francis has said that prayer for peace is stronger than any weapon. We can pray along with the Ukrainian people and people of goodwill throughout the world for peace because it will not only be Ukrainians or Ukrainian

citizens who will suffer in this, it'll also be Russian citizens whose fathers, brothers, husbands will be involved in the fighting and will also be suffering.

The Jesus Prayer

One of the simplest prayers is the Jesus Prayer – the prayer of the heart – where we admit to ourselves, to our God that we are all sinners, that we all need redemption, and that we place ourselves in the loving hands of Our Lord. The prayer is one that is very simple. It doesn't take a lot of memory and it's a prayer that we can repeat and you can live with.

**Jesus, Lord Jesus,
Son of the Living God,
have mercy on me, a sinner
Amen.**

Pope Francis has asked all Catholics to keep Ash Wednesday this year as a Day of Prayer and Fasting for the People of Ukraine.

Prayer for Peace

God of peace, God of mercy,
we pray for the people of Ukraine.
We lament the violence that has come to their country.
We ask for comfort for those who mourn,
hope for those who despair
and compassion for all who suffer.
We plead for an end to the violence and aggression
in their land.

We pray for the people of Russia.
We give thanks for those who have had the courage
to protest the invasion of Ukraine.
We ask for a change of heart
in those who commit acts of aggression and war
against their fellow citizens and neighbours.
We pray for those Russians who will suffer
because of sanctions and war.

We pray for leaders around the world.
May they work together for an end to war
and for the establishment of peace.
We seek wisdom for those who are making decisions
about how to respond to violence and war.
We ask for courage for those who campaign for peace.

We give thanks for the willingness of aid workers
to work in situations of war and unrest.
We ask for safety, wisdom, and compassion for all
working to alleviate suffering and heal the wounded.

We pray for journalists and media organisations
reporting the situation in Ukraine and Russia.

We pray for peace.
We pray that you might give us a desire for peace
and a willingness to work and hope and pray for peace
this day and every day.
Amen.

*(Adapted from Rev Sharon Hollis,
President of the Uniting Church in Australia)*