

Spirit of the Season

CELEBRATING
LENT &
EASTER



JUST A DROP? - WATER IN LENT



We use water every day, we can't do without it.

It gives us life and growth – it drowns and destroys.
Blessing of Water at Easter Vigil (also Isaiah 35: 1–10, Psalm 28)



Water is central to many important stories of the Bible.

In the beginning the spirit hovers over the water in the creation story.
1st reading at the Easter Vigil. (Genesis 1:2)



In the story of Noah God cleanses the earth with water and makes a new covenant never to do it again.
1st Sunday of Lent B. (Genesis 19:8-15)



The people of Israel are liberated through the waters of the Red Sea and enter the promise land through the waters of the river Jordan.
3rd reading of the Easter Vigil (Exodus 14:15-31)



In the waters of the Jordan, John baptised Jesus who was filled with the Spirit for his mission.
Baptism of the Lord (Mt 3:13ff) Also the Blessing of Water at Easter Vigil.



Sitting by a well on a hot day,
Jesus offers the water of life to the Samaritan woman.
3rd Sunday of Lent year A. (Jn 4:5-42)



Jesus sent the man born blind to wash in the pool of Siloam.
4th Sunday of Lent year A (Jn:1-41)



In Lent we celebrate our redemption through water and the Spirit.
Is just a drop enough?

When the Church speaks about Lent it uses phases like:

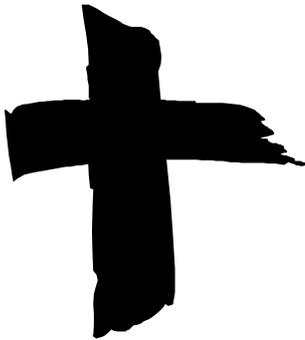
- The annual observance of Lent is the special season for the ascent to the holy mountain of Easter. 
- Lent is marked by two themes, the baptismal and the penitential.
- During Lent penance should not only be inward and individual, but also outward and social. 
- Each year you give us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed.

Do these statements reflect your experience?

See the back page for more on Water

Planning a liturgy -

The easy way!



One thing that can be a real nightmare is when the headteacher or department head comes to see you and says: “Will you do the Mass on so-and-so?” or even “Will you prepare a whole School liturgy?” Your brain moves into ‘hyperdrive’ as you wonder where to begin...

First tip: prepare the liturgy with someone else. It is always easier to share ideas with a colleague than to look at a blank sheet on your own. Best practice would be to prepare the liturgy with whoever is leading it - but sometimes this is not practical. Why not double up with a fellow teacher and help each other?

Second tip: apply the skills you already have in preparing lessons. There are many different ways to prepare liturgy. What follows is one method but you will soon find a process that suits you.

Ash Wednesday for example

- *Firstly:* Who, what, when, where and how?

Start by establishing all the necessary information:

Who is the liturgy for?

A Mass for the whole school will be different from a liturgy just for one class. On Ash Wednesday there might members of the parish present.

What are we celebrating?

It is good to have an idea before you start of what the liturgy will be about. Often this will be developed when you have reflected on the readings. Beware of limiting the power of liturgy by selecting just one theme.

When is the liturgy?

Check the liturgical calendar (you will find it in your diocesan yearbook or your diocese may publish it separately – your school should have a copy). Is it a feast – are there particular readings or anything else special? On Ash Wednesday the readings are laid down, as is the structure of the liturgy. Whatever the day, it is always worth checking the readings of the day. They can be surprisingly appropriate.

Where is the liturgy?

The place of celebration will make a difference. Liturgy is not just words — so keep an eye on the visual.

How?

Will it be a Mass or not? If it is a Mass a structure is given to us but get to know the Directory on Children's Masses. This Church document gives guidance on how the Mass can be adapted to the needs of children. If it is not a Mass you have greater freedom but all liturgy generally falls into a pattern of: Gather—Word—Symbolic Action—Sending forth.

On Ash Wednesday this would mean:

Gather	<i>Opening Song</i>
	<i>Introduction</i>
	<i>Opening Prayer</i>
Word	<i>Liturgy of the Word</i>
Symbolic Action	<i>Blessing and distribution of Ashes</i>
Sending Forth	<i>Dismissal sending us on our Lenten Journey</i>

You have the dry bones of a liturgy now you must put some flesh on it.



LITURGY INFO

There is no penitential rite at the beginning on Ash Wednesday

Liturgy of the Word

Reading—Joel 2: 12–18

Psalm 50

Reading—2 Cor 5:20–6:2

Gospel—Matthew 6:1–616-18.

You can find the readings and prayers for Ash Wednesday in most Weekday Missals after the season of Christmas. They can usually be found in Sunday Missals too .

Things to consider:

Signing each other with ashes can be done by anyone. They can be blessed beforehand. If it is a whole school liturgy, why not get the class teacher and a couple of parents to help with each class.



- *Secondly* The readings

Find the readings either in a Missal or a Bible (See box for more information). After looking at all the readings decide if you are going to use all of them or a selection. See the extract from the Directory on Children's Masses for more information.

- *Thirdly* Reflect on the readings

The messages, themes and images of the readings are key to preparing the liturgy. Take time to reflect on the readings. Read the Gospel at least twice with time for reflection. Try reading it out loud. What words and phrases stick out? What do they mean to us today? Look at the other readings (even if you are not using them). Do they tie into these themes and images? This may form the basis of the reflection during the liturgy. Note that the Directory allows for someone other than the priest to give this reflection (DCM 24).

Key images	Almsgiving	<i>Why are these important to our Lenten</i>
	Prayer &	<i>journey to Easter?</i>
	Fasting	<i>What do they mean to you/ to people today?</i>

- *Fourthly* Back to the structure

Go back to the structure you identified at the beginning. What needs to be changed and adapted? Get a feel for the flow of the liturgy. What needs to be emphasised?

- *Fifthly* Music?

We use music to emphasise the important parts of the liturgy. If everything is sung there is no contrast between the various parts of the liturgy. Decide where you will use music. On Ash Wednesday priorities will include the Gospel Acclamation and music for the distribution of ashes but you will also need an Opening Song to establish the mood of the celebration and perhaps a closing song to take us into Lent. Don't forget silence. Ending the liturgy in silence could be very powerful.

- *Sixthly* Ministry?

Who does what? Liturgy should never be a one-man show. Identify where you need different people: readers, musicians, people to distribute ashes etc.

- *Seventhly* Preparation

The various ministers will need preparation. You may also need to write intercessions, an introduction and other texts. The DCM will give guidance as to where texts are laid down and where they can be adapted. Don't forget the visual.

- Celebrate

Liturgy cannot be planned it can only be prepared. It only exists in celebration when all the elements of word, music and action come together.

- And afterwards...

When the liturgy is over reflect on how it went. What worked, what could be improved? It will make preparation easier next time.

CLASSROOM LINKS



Ash Wednesday and Lent...

- More than one voice could be used to tell the Gospel story or even act it out.
- Word Art for display throughout the season. (Key words: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving)
- Fasting (doing without) that others might benefit (almsgiving). We don't give up to lose weight or to save for a holiday. Work with CAFOD (www.cafod.org.uk)

Choosing readings - from the Directory on Children's Masses

42. ...If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the gospel reading should never be omitted.
44. In the choice of readings the criterion to be followed is the quality rather than the quantity of the texts from Sacred Scripture. A shorter reading is not in itself always more suited to children than a lengthy reading. Everything depends on the spiritual advantage that reading can bring to the children.

Music

can create the sound of the season.



What is the sound of Lent? Perhaps it is less music—more silence; simpler accompaniments, fewer instruments. Is there anything you can sing unaccompanied or with just percussion?

In Lent we fast from the Alleluia so for the **Gospel Acclamation** we use other texts. Chris O'Hara's *Glory and praise to you, Lord* can be found in Celebration Hymnal for Everyone (CFE) and Laudate (Ld).

The **Psalms** are essential to Lent with their message of mercy, forgiveness and searching for God. The following settings all work well: Ps 41: *As the deer longs*-Hurd (CFE, Ld); Ps 50: *Give me a new heart* -Walker (Ld) Ps 62: *O God, I seek you*-Haugen (CFE, Ld) Ps 90: *Be with me Lord*-Haugen (Ld). All these can be used in a variety of ways, such as just using the response.

Marty Haugen's *Return to God* (Ld) has a response that could be used on its own or as a response to prayers.

Taizé chants such as *Bless the Lord my soul* can be very effective. If you do not know it, try Bernadette Farrell's *Praise to you, O Christ our Saviour* (CFE, Ld). Its Lenten words and strong tune make it very suitable for beginnings and ends of liturgy.



POOLS

OF WATER

Baptism by water in the name of the Trinity has always been the normal way of entry into the Christian community which we call the Church. It is part of a connected series of sacramental rites known as the Rites of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist). In any act of common worship (liturgy), words, actions and visual symbols work together to bring out the deep meaning of the celebration. Water is the chief symbol used at Baptism. It is easy to see why. Initiation is the entrance into the new life of Christ.

From New Testament times the followers of Jesus used rivers to perform the acts of baptism. However as time moved on particular buildings were used for Baptisms, these were called baptisteries and inside them fonts were constructed. At first pools or tanks were built where the candidates were submerged (that is, put under the water) or immersed (that is, stood in the water and had more poured over them). Most of these fonts were quite large, all of them were capable of fitting an adult. Most of them had to be stepped into by descending into the

water from one side, and stepped out of by ascending steps on the other side (descent equals dying, ascent equals rising).

Later fonts became smaller because baptism was mainly for children. They were moved into the church itself, usually near the entrance to remind the people that you enter the church through the sacrament of baptism. Today with the return to adult as well as infant baptism we are recovering the ancient tradition of submersion or immersion and the practical and symbolic necessity of the large font, with plenty of water.

The custom of blessing oneself with water on entering a church stems from our baptismal practice. The water for this is blessed at the beginning of Mass. In Easter time it is normally the baptismal water blessed at the Easter Vigil. The old custom of emptying the stoups before the Easter Vigil highlights this connection. It is a useful reminder to us all that we continually live out our baptismal vows in the name of God and participate in the liturgy as a baptised people.

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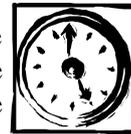


CLASSROOM LINKS

- Plan Reconciliation Services.
Extra Prayer for Lent
Violet cloths, dried twigs, sand and stones for a Lenten display.
- A visit to one of your local Churches to see the font. Find the holy water stoups by the door and practise blessing yourselves
- Ask to see a Baptismal Register.
A record of our entry into the Church.
- A classroom display of water.
- In your Easter display you could use water.

WHEN IS EASTER?

Easter Sunday is a movable feast; it is a different date every year. From this date many other liturgical dates are worked out such as the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. This year Easter Sunday is very late: 23rd April. How is the date worked out? Easter is reckoned by the Spring Equinox: when there are equal hours of day and night. It is the first Sunday after the full moon after the Spring Equinox. This year that means: Spring Equinox – 21st March, next full moon – 18th April, the following Sunday is 23rd April. All this means that Easter can be as early as 22nd March and as late as 25th April.



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