

# Ash Wednesday Service

## Song

Sign of the Cross

*The teacher may decide to use the following liturgical greeting:*

### Teacher

Praised be the God of grace, mercy and peace.  
Blessed be God for ever.

### All

Blessed be God for ever.

## Introduction

*The teacher briefly explains the meaning of the gathering, using the following or similar words:*

### Teacher

Today is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. During Lent we do as Jesus did when he was in the wilderness. We pay more attention to God, who is always with us; we pay more attention to other people. Today we will put ashes on our foreheads as a sign that we want to be like Jesus.

## Opening Prayer

### Teacher

God, always with us,  
help us to draw closer to you.  
Help us to know how much you love us.  
Make us eager to be good and kind to others.  
During the season of Lent,  
may we turn away from sin and live like Jesus.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

### All

Amen.

## The Word of God

### Reader

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 1:9 & 12).

'Jesus came from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the place where John was. John baptised Jesus in the Jordan river. Then the Spirit sent Jesus into the desert alone. He was in the desert for forty days.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

### All

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## Distribution of Ashes

*The teacher, with assistance from other adults or some of the children, if necessary, places ashes on those who come forward. (S/he may wish to begin by placing ashes on her/his own forehead, or another person may do this.) This may be done in the form of a cross on each forehead.*

*The teacher (or other) says to each one:*

### Teacher

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

or

Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return.

or

N., you are chosen by God! Love God and love others!

*Note: Down through the years, in some places, there has been the tradition of receiving ashes barefoot. The teacher might consider the possibility of the children removing their shoes for the distribution of ashes.*

## Intercessions

### Teacher

Let us ask God to bless us during this season of Lent.

### Reader

We ask God to help us to notice the good things that God and others give us. Lord in your mercy...

### All

Hear our prayer.

### Reader

We ask God to help us forgive anyone who has hurt us. Lord in your mercy...

### All

Hear our prayer.

### Reader

We ask God to help us to say sorry to anyone whom we have hurt. Lord in your mercy...

### All

Hear our prayer.

### Reader

We ask God to help us to share with others. Lord in your mercy...

### All

Hear our prayer.

### Reader

We ask God to help us to turn away from selfishness. Lord in your mercy...

### All

Hear our prayer.

### Teacher

Now let us pray together to the Father, using the words that Jesus has given us.

### All (say or sing)

Our Father... /Ār nAthair...

## Conclusion

### Teacher

May God the Father bless us;  
may Jesus his Son come to help us;  
may the Holy Spirit be with us.

### All

Amen.

### Teacher

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.



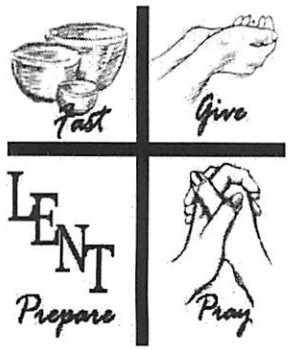
In preparation for Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday, we discuss as a family what our Lenten practices will be this year.

First, we discuss the 40 days that we will spend on a journey with the Lord towards Good Friday. The number 40 represents the perfect amount of time needed for the completion of a task (hence the 40 days of the Noah story, for example).

As we accompany Him, we want to focus more on Him and make greater room for the Lord in our hearts, so we are asked to sacrifice something that takes space in our hearts right now.

Ideas might include:

- no watching TV for three days out of the week or no computer games for 2 days in the week.
- no ice cream
- no sweets
- no french fries



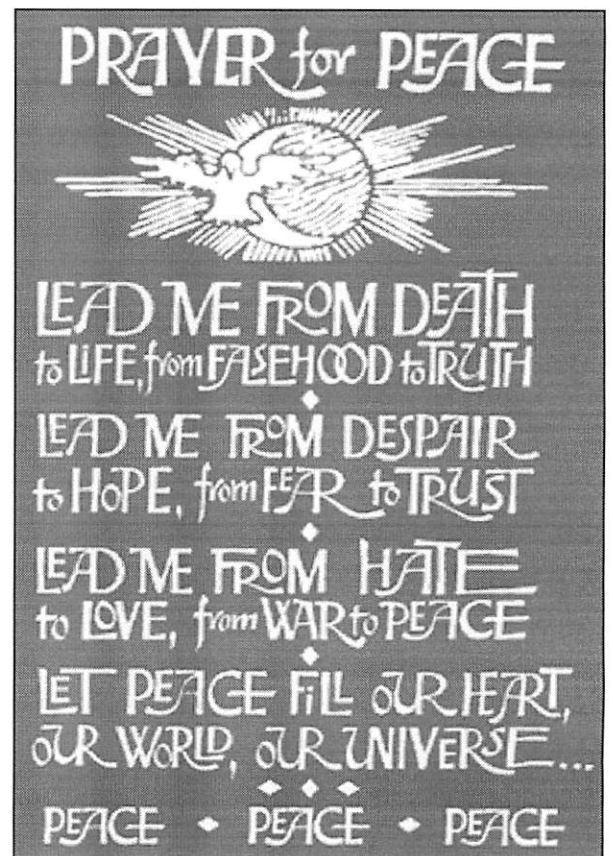
So, the children might be asked to: 1) sacrifice something for the sake of making room for the Lord and clearing one's mind more to think about Him and

2) to adopt a holy habit.

Rather than have Lent solely focused on sacrifice meaning the taking away of something, we discuss how this is a time to adopt new habits to bring us closer to the Lord. Ideas included:

- making a morning offering prayer
- praying a decade of the rosary
- making an Act of Contrition in the evening
- kneeling beside one's bed for evening prayers
- spending time at one's prayer corner
- reading holy books relating to Lent
- **Journeying With the Family**  
The Lenten journey is also meant to be done together, so we as a family discuss what we could do together.

**Our Sacrifice:** to give up fast food (We tend to grab something cheap and easy on Saturdays or after weekly sport training. Instead, we'll save the money and put it in the Trocaire box.



# The Stations of the Cross

*A Project of the Armagh Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Group*

## Introduction

*The Stations of the Cross is used by individuals or groups who pray, reflect and meditate about the journey of Jesus Christ on his way to Calvary.*

*By doing this we accompany Jesus Christ through his passion, death and resurrection. and see our lives mirrored in his.*

**Before each station you may wish to say an Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...**

**After each station you may wish to say:**

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

## Praying the Stations

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
help me to accompany you on your journey to Calvary.

Allow me to see my life mirrored in your love.

Take my eyes,  
my hands, my mind and above all my heart,  
and let me see what you did  
for love of all.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be*

### 1<sup>st</sup> Station Jesus is condemned to death

Lord, as I come before you, I see you condemned. How often do I condemn others? Forgive me for the times when I reject others. Help me to forgive those who hurt me.

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Station Jesus carries His Cross

Lord, as I come before you I see you carry your heavy cross. I thank you for carrying all my sins under the weight of this cross. Help me when I feel I cannot shoulder my own worries and anxieties.

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Station Jesus falls for the first time

Lord, as I come before you, I see you falling under your heavy load. I feel the pain of your battered, bruised and broken body. Open my eyes, Lord, to those in need. Open my heart to those in need of

friendship and let me offer the healing touch of kindness.

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

### 4<sup>th</sup> Station Jesus meets His Mother.

Lord, as I come before you, I see your mother's grief and sorrow as you suffer and struggle. In times of pain and sorrow, help me to be aware of your constant loving presence. Help all in their journey through life's ups and downs.

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

### 5<sup>th</sup> Station Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His Cross

Lord, as I come before you, I see your pain and suffering as you carry the cross. Help me to carry my own cross, to support others and to lighten their burdens.

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

### 6<sup>th</sup> Station Veronica wipes the Face of Jesus

Lord, as I come before you, I see the gentle act of kindness by Veronica as she wipes your tortured face. Help me to welcome kindness and gentleness into my life and may I always share this with others.

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

### 7<sup>th</sup> Station Jesus falls for the second time

Lord, as I come before you I see you weakened and falling. As the years pass by, life can become more difficult for us. We sometimes feel drained, tired and dulled by the difficulties of everyday life. Lord, help me to rise again and to continue with a new hope and energy.

*"Lord Jesus, open my heart.*

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"*

**8th Station Jesus meets the Women of Jerusalem**

Lord, as I come before you I see the courageous women who helped and supported you on your journey to Calvary. They weren't afraid to let you know that they cared. You accepted their care and returned it. May our own experience of suffering make us compassionate towards others who suffer.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"

**9th Station Jesus falls the third time**

Lord, as I come before you I see you fall again. I am reminded of the many times I fall and how sometimes I find it difficult to get up and keep going. I pray that when I fail I can always start again with your help and your grace.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"

**10th Station Jesus is stripped**

Lord, as I come before you I see you stripped and humiliated. Jesus, clothe us with your care. Help all who suffer humiliation and isolation and those whose dignity is damaged at the hands of others.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"

**11th Station Jesus is nailed to the Cross**

Lord, as I come before you, I am aware of your pain as the soldiers nail you to the wood of the cross. Give me courage to accept the pains that come my way, for you have gone before me and you will show me the path to take.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"

**12th Station Jesus dies on the Cross**

Lord, as I come before you, I see the acceptance of all you suffered for me. Your love is more than I can ever imagine. Help me when I am filled with fear and doubt and to join my struggles with you and trust in your love.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"

**13th Station Jesus is taken down from the Cross**

Lord, as I come before you I look at your broken and lifeless body and I am filled with love for you. Help me to embrace the trials and crosses that come my way. When my time to die comes I ask

you to be by my side so that I may come to you with certain faith and trust in your love and compassion for all your people.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"

**14th Station Jesus is laid in the Tomb.**

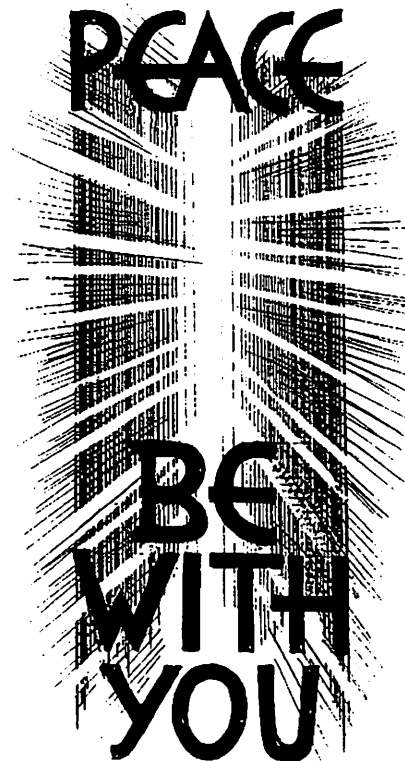
Lord, as I come before you, I see your broken body laid to rest and I am filled with sadness, yet I realise the price you paid was because of your love of all people. May I never take the sacrifices made for me and the love of others for granted.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"

**15th Station Jesus is raised to New Life**

Lord, as I come before you, it looks as if it is all over, but I know it's not. This is how it feels sometimes, but because of your resurrection I am filled with hope and joy. Help me to see that my ways are not always your ways. May I be aware of your loving presence in my life and in the world today, tomorrow and always.

"Lord Jesus, open my heart.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy hear me"



Please leave in church for use by others

# The Sacrament of Reconciliation - A Year-Group Celebration

## *Introduction*

## *Sign of the Cross*

### **Priest**

The Lord be with you.

### **All**

And also with you.

*The celebrant greets those present and briefly reminds them why they have gathered together. He may use the following words:*

### **Priest**

God sees the good in us and is always patient with us.

Sometimes we are not patient with people.

We do not see them as God sees them.

So, today, we say that we are sorry.

We know that God is always waiting to forgive us.

Let us pray, asking God's help with our lives.

*(Pause for silent prayer)*

God of love and forgiveness,  
in Baptism you made us members of the Church.

Forgive us our sins  
and help us to live as the Body of Christ.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

### **All**

Amen.

## *Liturgy of the Word*

One of the students carries the Bible in procession. *(Two candle-bearers may walk alongside the Bible. Incense may also be used.)* The child places the Bible reverently on the ambo (or reading stand), bows and returns to her/his place. *(Candle and incense bearers do likewise.)*

### **Priest**

God's word today helps us to celebrate the love and forgiveness of God. As we listen to the story of the Prodigal Son, we remember again that God always loves us. We remember, too, that sometimes we do not love God: we do not live as God wants. We are like the Prodigal Son, who turned his back on his father. Today, with God's love and help, we come to say that we are sorry. We come back to God, like the Prodigal Son who returns. We know that God is like the father of the Prodigal Son, always waiting to forgive us. *(Pause)*

Let us stand to greet the Gospel.

*If possible, all sing a Gospel Acclamation.*

### **Priest**

The Lord be with you.

### **All**

And also with you.

### **Priest**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke (Luke 15: 11-32).

### **All**

Glory to you, Lord.

*The celebrant reads the story of the Prodigal Son as given for the Fourth Sunday of Lent (C), on pp. 285-6, Lectionary, Volume I.*

### *Reflection on the Gospel*

*The children may wish to do a piece of drama here based on their work on the story of the Lost Son. Alternatively, the class or an individual child might read/recite the poem version of the Prodigal Son story. Alternatively, individual children might take one verse each; the last verse might then be said by all the children together.*

### **The Loving Father**

Once, long ago, there lived a wealthy man

And he had land and riches of great worth.

He had two sons who were his pride and joy.

He loved them more than anything on earth.

One day the younger took his share of wealth and left.

The father watched his son depart.

He watched until he disappeared from view,

And a great love was heavy in his heart.

The father was so sad each time he heard

The stories that his neighbours spread around.

Yet, still the father's love was deep and strong.

'Now he is lost,' he said, 'but he will be found.'

Each day he waited for his son's return

Saying 'He will come back, of that I'm sure'.

And then, one joyful day, he saw far off  
His son returning, dressed in rags and poor.

The father rushed to meet him eagerly.

He held him tightly, looked on him and smiled.

And everybody marvelled when they saw

The great love of the father for his child.

*(Caitríona O'Carroll)*

### *Examination of Conscience*

#### **Priest**

Patient God,

because you know the goodness that is in us, you wait for us always.

You never give up.

We thank you for the love that is in each one of us.

May your love grow in us as we think about the times we have been unloving to you, to the world, and to other people whom you also love.

#### **All**

##### *Prayer for Forgiveness*

O my God, help me to remember the times when I didn't live as Jesus asked me to.

Help me to be sorry and to try again. Amen.

*The celebrant invites the children to remember the times when they have been unloving to God, to the world, and to others.*

*If it seems appropriate to the teacher or students, the following may be amended or substituted to include other things.*

**Reader**

If we have been selfish and thought only of suiting ourselves (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have forgotten about other people and done only what we wanted (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have not honoured our parents or guardians (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have caused rows and arguments (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have forgotten to pray to God and to thank God for all the gifts we have been given (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have been jealous of other people and thought more of what they had (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have told lies to get ourselves out of awkward situations (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have been mean (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have refused to forgive others (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

**Reader**

If we have made it hard for people to say that they are sorry (*pause*), we will ask God's forgiveness.

**All**

God, forgive us!

*Liturgy of Reconciliation*

GENERAL CONFESSION OF SINS

**Priest**

We confess to God that we have sinned; we confidently remember God's mercy as we say together:

**All**

I confess to almighty God,  
And to you, my brothers and sisters,  
That I have sinned through my own fault,  
In my thoughts and in my words,  
In what I have done,  
And in what I have failed to do;  
And I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,  
All the angels and saints,  
And you, my brothers and sisters,  
To pray for me to the Lord our God. Amen.

**Priest**

The love of God is without limit and his  
mercy knows no bounds.  
We pray to God to help us to change our  
lives as we say:  
God, help us to live as Jesus asked.

**All**

God, help us to live as Jesus asked.

**Priest**

You welcome us home like the prodigal son:  
may we never forget your love.

**All**

God, help us to live as Jesus asked.

**Priest**

You bring us together as members of one  
Body:  
may we live together with others in love  
and peace.

**All**

God, help us to live as Jesus asked.

**Priest**

You look for us like the Good Shepherd:  
may we leave sin and selfishness behind.

**All**

God, help us to live as Jesus asked.

**Priest**

You have connected yourself to us in a  
covenant of love:  
as with people long ago, may your covenant  
change our ways.

**All**

God, help us to live as Jesus asked.

**Priest**

You teach us to love others and to forgive  
their sins against us:  
help us to make a new effort and to try  
again.

Now let us pray in the words our Saviour  
gave us:

**All**

Our Father... / Ár nAthair...

**Priest**

Father, our source of life,  
you know our weaknesses.  
May we reach out with joy to grasp your  
hand  
and walk more readily in your ways.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All**

Amen.

INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

*The students are now invited to approach a  
priest. Each one acknowledges his or her  
own sinfulness and expresses his or her  
sorrow before the priest. The priest  
extends his hands over the head of each  
penitent and says the Absolution, ending  
with the words: 'I absolve you from your  
sins, in the name of the Father, and of the  
Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen'. The  
priest encourages the child to live as Jesus  
asks and proposes a suitable act of*



*penance. The act of penance should correspond, as far as possible, to the seriousness and nature of the wrongdoings mentioned. It might take the form of a prayer, an act of self-denial, or an act of kindness to another.*

**Priest**  
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All**  
Thanks be to God.

CONCLUDING PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND  
THE SENDING OUT.

**All**  
**Prayer after Forgiveness**  
O my God, thank you for forgiving me.  
Help me to love others.  
Help me to live as Jesus asked me to.  
Amen.

**Priest**  
We thank you, God, for the Good News of  
your forgiveness.  
Through Jesus, your Son, we know that  
your love is with us always.  
We praise and thank you for forgiving us  
our sins.  
We make our prayer through Christ our  
Lord.

**All**  
Amen.

**Priest**  
The Lord be with you.

**All**  
And also with you.

**Priest**  
May almighty God bless you, the Father,  
the Son + and the Holy Spirit.

**All**  
Amen.

## Prayer Service for Holy Week

### Notes:

1. *If possible, before the service, place a cross in a place of prominence. In displaying it, you might like to use a cloth (purple) and/or some decoration of a stark nature.*
2. *You might like to consider the use of percussion instruments after the words of the 'Reader' to enhance the meaning of the text.*
3. *If you choose to include the third part of this service – Venerating the Cross – you will need a suitable cross or crucifix. Depending on the chosen form of veneration, you might also need a cloth with which to wipe it. If the number is large, you may need more than one cross.*

*A suitable song may be sung.*

### **Leader**

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

### **All**

Amen.

### REMEMBERING THE PASSION OF JESUS

#### **Reader (slowly)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

#### **Narrator**

These are the last words of Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark.  
We remember them now.  
As we come near the three special days in the life of Jesus,  
we recall the events that led to that moment.

#### **Reader (threatening)**

We must get rid of him.  
We must undo him.  
We must put an end to him.

#### **Narrator**

The chief priests planned to get rid of Jesus.  
Jesus shared the Last Supper with his friends.

#### **Reader (reverently)**

This is my body, which will be given up for you.  
This is my blood, which will be poured out for you.  
Do this in memory of me.

#### **Narrator**

Then they went to Gethsemane.

#### **Reader (suddenly)**

Arrest him! Arrest him!  
Take him! Tie him!

#### **Narrator**

And so it began...  
... that awful night  
... that terrible night  
... that cold night  
... that cruel night

#### **Reader (haughtily)**

We don't need witnesses.  
We don't need proof.  
But we do need the Romans.  
They will do our dirty work.

#### **Narrator**

The Sanhedrin had him in their power.  
They took him to Pilate.

#### **Reader (with disbelief)**

The King of the Jews?  
The King of the Jews?  
Who says you are King of the Jews?

#### **Narrator**

Pilate brought him out to the people.

#### **Reader (shouting)**

Crucify him!  
Crucify him!  
Crucify him!

#### **Narrator**

There was something fishy here.  
Pilate didn't care.  
There was something wrong here.  
Pilate didn't bother.  
There was something that didn't add up here.  
Pilate took the easy way.  
Jesus got the hard way: the way of the cross.

#### **Reader (mocking)**

Hail King of the Jews!  
Hail King of the Jews!  
Hail King of the Jews!

#### **Narrator**

The soldiers beat him.  
The soldiers scourged him.  
They pushed him to Calvary.

#### **Reader**

Save yourself! Come down from the cross!  
Save yourself! Come down from the cross!  
Save yourself! Come down from the cross!

#### **Narrator**

The people jeered.  
The chief priest jeered.  
Those who were crucified with him jeered.  
And then it struck...

#### **Reader (slowly)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

#### **Narrator**

Jesus was alone.

**Reader (slowly)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

**Narrator**

Jesus was unloved.

**Reader (slowly)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

**Narrator**

Jesus died... (Pause)

But there was another voice...

... a voice that came at the end

... a voice of one who saw it all

... a voice with words when others had none left.

**Reader (reverently)**

God's Son!

God's Son!

Truly, this man was God's Son!

**ACKNOWLEDGING OUR SINS**

**Leader**

And now we pray:

We admit that we have sinned as we say together:

**All**

I confess to almighty God...

**Leader**

On our sins against people who are weaker than we are,  
Lord have mercy.

**All**

Lord have mercy!

**Leader**

On our sins against people whom we should respect,  
Lord have mercy.

**All**

Lord have mercy!

**Leader**

On our sins against people who are different from us,  
Lord have mercy.

**All**

Lord have mercy!

**Leader**

On our sins against nature and the environment,  
Lord have mercy.

**All**

Lord have mercy!

**Leader**

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

**All**

Amen.

**VENERATING THE CROSS**

**Leader**

We remember the love of Jesus for all.

We reverence the cross.

*At this point, a song or chant is sung, e.g., 'Jesus Remember Me'.  
One cross (or more if necessary) is brought to a central point.*

**Either**

*Students (and staff) come forward to venerate the cross. This may  
be done in one of several ways, e.g., kissing the cross, bowing  
before the cross, or genuflecting before the cross.*

**or**

*The cross may be carried in procession among the assembly.*

**or**

*The cross may simply be held up for a moment of silent veneration  
by all.*

**Leader**

We bow our heads and pray for God's blessing (Pause)

May the Cross of Christ bring us hope in times of worry.

May the Cross of Christ reassure us of God's love.

May the Cross of Christ inspire us to unselfish love.

**All**

Amen.

**Leader**

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All**

Thanks be to God

A song may be sung.